

Sikh Culture & Social Values

A CURTAIN RAISER

Edited by :
Dr. Pushpinder Singh



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Dr. Pushpinder Singh

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Dedicated To Youth

An Appeal

The Sikh youth can feel great and happy by owning their glorious heritage, while the golden future is before them, if they sincerely believe in, understand and practice the Sikh philosophy. Unless the Sikh character is practiced by the youth in their daily life, how can non-Sikhs know that it is great to be a Sikh? If young people owing their allegiance to Sikh faith are addicted to drugs, alcohol, bad habits, and antisocial behavior as other youth are, how can they communicate to the people that Sikh faith and high character go together? We have to tread the path laid down for us by the Gurus and not allow ourselves to be derailed by the pressures of modern society. The firm decision of the mind that the right path has to be stuck to whatever the circumstances helps everyone greatly. It brings real peace and bliss which most of us wish to enjoy.

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Publisher's Note

Punjabis in general and Sikhs in particular feel great pride in their rich heritage. All over the world Punjabis are known for their hospitality, their open mindedness, colorful culture, hard working nature, bravery and liveliness. Owing to these qualities, a large number of them are settled all over the world. Every Sikh takes light from Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji's universal ideology and the great deeds done by all Guru Sahibs and great Sikhs. Sikh History witnessed the highly pious character and social values of Sikhs. In the present era of commercialization and high tech, nuclear families have replaced the joint families which were very effective instruments to impart good values. Due to peer pressure of social stigma & status, people are extremely involved in minting money & marinating their status due to which many fell prey to drugs, cutting hairs (ਪਤਿਤਪੁਣਾ), immoral activities etc and forgetting their rich heritage and social values. The present book is an excellent effort by Dr. Pushpinder Singh to compile and edit the valuable articles of eminent Sikh personalities.

Articles of Principal Teja Singh, Prof. Puran Singh, Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh, Dr. Tarlochan Singh, Dr. I.J. Singh have emerged from their indepth study & knowledge of Gurbani and Sikh heritage. In this book various aspects of our social values & Sikh Culture like high character (ਸਚੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥), Honest living, Habit of sharing, welfare of humanity, prayer, code of conduct, rituals, ceremonies to be followed in leading a happy life i.e. during birth, marriage, death etc, concept of kakaar (ਕਕਾਰ) answer many queries which generally

appear spontaneously in the mind of youth and they are explained beautifully. Dr. Pushpinder Singh though in medical profession has a great passion for Sikh values and is making persistent efforts to take the message of Dhur Ki Bani (Sri Guru Granth Sahib) to everyone, wherever one be, to lead a good and healthy social life and have eternal happiness. May Waheguru bless him with His grace so that he can accomplish this mission successfully.

'Sarbat Da Bhalla'

Iqbal Singh

Incharge, Head Office
Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle

Foreword

Sikh Culture & Social Values described here in this book are not simply confined to any particular part of the globe rather they attract the attention of the people all the world over. Dr. Pushpinder Singh has made a judicious selection of certain pressing and relevant topics from the pen of established and esteemed personalities of Sikh world. In all there are nine chapters arranged and compiled in a befitting sequence.

The first chapter 'Sikh Culture' by Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh ji portrays our social concepts and religious beliefs. It also deals with our thought process and its practical application leading to social behaviour.

The religion encourages mass participation (Forms and Ceremonies), which according to Principal Teja Singh ji act as a cementing force to bind people together. In another chapter 'Uplift of Man.....' worthy principal has delineated the intentions and actions for building the character of a Sikh.

In the chapter 'Nam Simran-Meditation' the author has dwelt upon the purifying role played by simran & meditation for dispelling evil forces from the mind.

Prof. Puran Singh, an inspired mystic poet has highlighted the significance of kirpan as a god-given gift from the guru rather than an instrument of offence or defence. All the 5 k's are bestowed upon the sikh by the divine master after thoroughly rinsing them with spirituality.

In the topic 'Sikh Social Order', Dr. Tarlochan Singh has beautifully enunciated the main tenets and principles of sikhism.

Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh, the chief contributor, in his writing on 'Sikh Diaspora' has described how sikhs settled in different parts of the globe. The writer takes due notice of the enterprising nature and adventurous life of the Sikhs. Their traits are well-defined. Guru Granth & Sikh Panth act as the unifying link even though the community is widely scattered and vastly spread. The author has brought out the wonderful job done abroad by principal Teja Singh ji at the instance of Sant Attar Singh ji. Pricipal Teja Singh Ji specifically concentrated his efforts to help out the community people around the Pacific coast in USA and Canada.

In the chapter 'Growing up in Canada', the author presents an interesting study to the experiences of the turbaned youth, born and brought up in Canada. Here the mindset of youth has been fairly reflected. The vital role that the parents ought to play at such critical junctures has also been brought to light.

In the last chapter 'Modern Sikh' Dr. I.J. Singh has boldly broken the myth of so-called modernity.

Life is to be lived as a whole, not by parts. Parts can never prove the whole. Any number of wrongs cannot make a right. Even two heads are not better than one. While effecting the ever-biggest metamorphosis the guru demanded complete surrender in the form of head, not a part of the body as an arm or leg. Hence, it is only the single-minded devotion and dedication that can pave the way for an ideal way of life for a sikh.

In short the book 'Sikh Culture & Social Values' throws a flood of light on various aspects of Sikh way of life and the editor has done his job well.

Ram Singh

Chief, Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle
Formerly, Principal. ADC Mastuana

From Director's Desk

Sikh faith is a way of life where stress has been laid on ethical and virtuous living. Sikhs have a revolutionary faith with rich cultural and social values. The articles in this book have been selected to portray the true spirit of sikh culture and social values. Some unpublished articles of Dr Gurbakhsh Singh like Nam Simran, Sikh Diaspora, and Growing up in Canada-experiences of a turbaned youth have been included.

The topic Sikhism- A Revolutionary Faith has been taken from the book Sikhism A Universal Message. Dr Gurbakhsh Singh has written many books, that answer questions of youth asked in various gurmat training camps.

The article of Prof Puran Singh “The Sword of Guru Gobind Singh” has been taken from the book, The Spirit Born People published by Punjabi University Patiala. Prof Puran Singh was temperamentally a mystic. For several years he remained a sanyasi and later came under the spell of mystical bhakti of Sikhism to which he returned after years of alienation. He has written many books in English and Punjabi.

“Uplift of man based on character” is from The Sikh Religion published by SGPC Amritsar by Principal Teja Singh who was the principal of Khalsa College Amritsar for several years. He has written many books and articles on the fundamental issues of Sikh faith. He has guided many students to follow the path of virtuous gurmat life by his own exemplary life style.

The article of Dr Tarlochan Singh “ Sikh Social

Order” has been adapted from book Social Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh published by Academy of Sikh Culture and Religion, Patiala. He has authored many books on the life and teachings of Sikh Gurus and on Sikhism.

The article Modern Sikh by Dr. I.J.Singh of New York is adapted from article “Let us stand up and be counted” published in Sikh Review Calcutta “January 2006”. He is Professor of Anatomy in USA and has written many books on problems of modern Sikh youth and Diaspora

I am thankful to Dr. Joginder Kaur of Hyderabad, Jasbir Singh of Ludhiana for their valuable suggestions, Gurjinder Singh and other members of Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle for help rendered in the publication of this book.

Paramjit Singh
Director
Publication Directorate



Sikh Culture

The culture of a people, a nation, or a community refers to their social concepts, religious beliefs, skills and moral values. In short, culture means the way a people live, think and behave. It includes their food habits, clothes, language, rituals and religion. It also tells about their institutions and organizations related to the education and training of people for the future course of their lives .

The Sikh culture flows from the principle of the Fatherhood of God and the oneness of humanity, irrespective of the language and social values of the people. It requires a Sikh to treat all persons equally and "see" the reflection of God in every human being. Accordingly, a life within the family, earning honestly, sharing earnings with the needy and wishing well for all humanity, is rated superior to a life of renunciation and meditation in the forest. Sikhism subscribes to the ethos of sewa (voluntary service), simran (love of God) and equality.

Guru Nanak preached that to become a holy

person and to achieve the goals of human life, one need not belong to any one particular faith, caste or community. He preached that any person who sincerely and devotedly loves God can realize Him. The claim of any person, holy man, prophet or Avtar that people can reach God only through him is not tenable. God judges people according to their deeds alone, mere belief or the mechanical performance of rituals has no value to God.

Sikh Religious Values

Belief in the one Gracious Almighty God, the Creator, is the foundation of the Sikh faith; truth and love are its main pillars. Hollow rituals and ceremonies are not given any importance. It is the sincerity of the spirit with which they are performed that is valued. The guiding motto of a Sikh is:

Truth is above every thing.

Highest is truthful living.

ਸਚੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥ (ਅੰਕ ੬੨)

Sikhs are required to sing the virtues of God both in the morning and in the evening. This is to keep their minds free from evil thoughts and remind them of the mission of human life. Before going to bed, a third set of hymns reminds a Sikh that life will end just as the day has ended.

Every Sikh prayer ends with the request: "Lord, in Thy Name, bless the whole of humanity." Sikhs should not have ill will for any one, even for adversaries. A Sikh has no enemy and is reminded of this in the very first line of a hymn: "God, you are the true Lord, the Creator,

without fear and without enmity." Sikhs do not worship any image or picture. They believe that worship of God consists in singing His virtues and serving people. Therefore, a Sikh needs no idol to worship.

A Sikh is expected to visit the gurdwara every day. Wherever Guru Nanak Dev went, he established a *dharamsal*, later known as a gurdwara. People gather in gurdwaras to sing the virtues of God. There everyone, irrespective of faith or caste, is treated equally. Food and shelter are provided to all needy persons. The oppressed are given protection from aggressors. In today's terminology, the gurdwara is a social centre open to all, even though primarily it is a religious centre. The daily routine in a gurdwara consists of the installation of **Guru Granth Sahib**, recitation of the prescribed hymns, performance of *keertan* and the presentation of a discourse on any aspect of the Word as enshrined in **Guru Granth Sahib**, Sikh philosophy and the Sikh code of conduct. When *dhadis*, ballad singers, are available they narrate stories of the lives of the Gurus, martyrs and brave Sikhs.

In the evening, recitation of the prescribed hymns may be preceded by *keertan*. The closing ceremony involves the final prayer, and the carrying of **Guru Granth Sahib** to his resting place for the night.

The Gurdwara is run through contributions of the *sangat* and the persons visiting the gurdwara. Every member is expected to contribute, according to his/her earnings. All contributions, small or large, are equally valued. It is, however, the practice, based on a "directive" from the Master, to contribute one tenth of one's gross

income for community development. Those who for one reason or another contribute less are never despised. Contributions may be made anonymously if so desired.

Sikh Ethics

A Sikh lives a life of *chardi-kala* - optimism. Sikhs believe whatever God does is good for all. They know that everything happens according to His Will which should be accepted cheerfully because the Lord never does anything wrong.

A Sikh lives in peace because a Sikh is always contented. He or she is welcome to earn as much money as possible and lead a happy prosperous life but must earn his living through honest means. Collecting money and being rich, of course, is not the purpose of the life of a Sikh. Dishonest earnings are strictly prohibited. A Sikh should be ever grateful to the Lord and never think of acting against the interest of individuals or a community.

A Sikh's day should be spent in doing good deeds, which are one's true companions. Serving people is the mission of human life.

Sikhism does not recommend giving up family life and going to the forest for peace. Sikhs are not to become ascetic recluses. Living a virtuous life as a householder is mentioned as the holiest life. Avoiding anger, greed, and display of ego is essential to remaining on the Sikh path. A Sikh does not engage in pre-marital or extra-marital sex. However, if one partner dies, the other is permitted to re-marry without any kind of moral or social stigma. The practice of *sati*, the burning alive of a

widow on the pyre of her husband, is prohibited for Sikhs.

Social behaviour of a Sikh towards other people is guided by the belief that all humans form one fellowship. All people, whatever their belief, country, colour, sex, education, financial or political status, are members of the same class, humanity. No one is inferior or superior. A person who follows this belief is a member of the holiest group, *ayee panthee sagal jamatee*.

The Sikh's code of behaviour is summarized by the following six required practices:

1. Meditation (*nam japna*):

A Sikh is directed to concentrate the mind on God to reflect on God's virtues. By constant thinking of the Creator, a Sikh slowly develops a feeling of affection and love for all humans, the "children" of the same Father-Mother, God. This realization changes the thinking and behavior of a person. Instead of hurting others, life is utilized serving needy people. For reminding oneself of this philosophy, a Sikh is required to recite prescribed hymns, both morning and evening everyday. A Sikh is to attend a congregation regularly to listen to the singing of the virtues of God.

2. Honest Living (*dharam di kirit*):

A Sikh is required to earn a livelihood by the sweat of the brow. If a person is dishonest and takes what belongs to others, these earnings are declared by the Guru as the "blood of the poor". The Guru explains that just as beef is prohibited to a Hindu and pork to a Muslim, so are dishonest earnings prohibited to a Sikh.

3. Sharing with others (*vand ke chhakna*):

A Sikh is duty bound to share his earnings with

needy persons just as parents are duty bound to provide their children with food, clothing and other necessities. This sharing must be done with a sense of responsibility, and not with an idea of charity. Charity is given only by God and we humans share god's blessings with each other.

4. Worshipping the Lord of Eternity (*puja akal kī*):

The Guru advises people to worship the one Almighty God and not to concern themselves with any other god. God lives in the hearts of humans; there is no place without God, who expresses Himself through creation.

5. Concern for others (*sarbat da bhala*):

Every Sikh prays at least twice a day: "O God, in thy name shower your blessings on whole humanity." This belief in the oneness of humanity, and the insistence on working for the welfare of all people whatever their faith, even at the cost of sacrificing one's own life, is what sets Sikhism apart from other religions.

6. Maintaining good moral behaviour (*sacha achar*):

The high character of the Sikhs in war and in peace was praised highly by a Muslim historian of the 18th century in these words: "In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth and ornament of a woman. There is no adultery among them. They do not make friends with adulterers and house-breakers." Moral code is "*Truth is above everything, Highest is truthful living.*"

"ਸਚੁ ਓਰੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥ (ਅੰਕ ੬੨)

The Khalsa Panth

All Sikhs, or "saint soldiers", are members of the Khalsa Panth. The Khalsa Panth was founded in 1699 by the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh. It dedicates itself to serving the weak members of society and fighting oppression. Members of the Khalsa will fight, if necessary, to preserve the rights of any human being.

Code of conduct for the Khalsa

(Sikh Rehat Maryada)

Over the years, there have been many interpretations of Guru Gobind Singh's original code of conduct which was established in 1699. The version approved today was produced after ten years of exhaustive studies and discussions by a group of Sikh scholars appointed to do the task. Their document is known as the Sikh Rehat Maryada.

The code defines a Sikh as any person, man or woman, who has faith in One God and the Ten Gurus (from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh), in the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib and the ten Gurus, and in the amrit of the tenth Guru; and who does not follow any other religion.

The code outlines the four major ceremonies that are held for a Sikh.

(1) Birth

The birth of a baby in a family is considered to be a gift of God. To express their thanks to the Almighty and select a name for the baby, the family visits a gurdwara. This is done usually about a month after the birth of the child, when the mother feels strong enough to move

about. The family makes offerings of money and *karah prashad* (a pudding of wheat flour, butter and sugar) shared by every one present. Hymns which express thanks for God's blessings are sung or recited by the *granthi* (the priest).

To name the baby, **Guru Granth Sahib** is opened at random after prayers. The first letter of the *hukam*, or commandment of the Guru on that page is used as the first letter of the baby's name. For example, if the first letter is *gagga* (G), any name beginning with G such as Gian or Gurdit may be chosen by the parents for their baby. For a boy, "Singh" is added to the name; for a girl "Kaur". The chosen name is announced by the *granthi* to the *sangat*. The *sangat* approves it with a loud uttering of the Sikh *jakara*: *Anyone who says God is True and Everlasting, is blessed by Him.*

ਬੋਲੇ ਸੋ ਨਿਹਾਲ, ਸਤਿ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅਕਾਲ

(2) Amrit Sanchar

The ceremony for the initiation of a Sikh to the Khalsa Panth is called *amrit sanchar* or *khande-bate di pahaul*. It is conducted whenever the parents consider their child has grown up to understand the meaning of the ceremony, has learnt the basic principles of the faith, and can follow the code of conduct required of a Sikh.

There is no minimum age prescribed for participants in this ceremony. A person is, however, expected to become an *amritdhari* Sikh, that is, to be formally initiated to the faith, before his/her wedding. One may, however, take *amrit* at any stage of his/her mature life. *Amrit* is a vow to live the virtuous life of a

Sikh. The age of the candidate is not a consideration.

For undergoing the *amrit* ceremony, one approaches the local gurdwara. The management nominates a team of *panj pyaras* (five prominent committed Sikhs) for the purpose. All persons, men and women, high caste or low caste, rich or poor, are welcome without any discrimination to take *amrit* as equal members. The candidates wear the Five K's: *kesh* (unshorn hair), *kirpan* (sword), *kara* (iron bracelet), *kangha* (comb), and *kacha* (a special type of underwear). They gather in a neat, clean room where **Guru Granth Sahib** is installed.

One of the *panj pyaras* describes the basic principles of the faith, explains what it means to be a Sikh. He then asks all the persons assembled there if they are willing to join the Panth and lead the life of a Sikh. Those who agree to this and bow before **Guru Granth Sahib** are admitted to the *amrit* ceremony.

The ceremony involves the preparation of the *khande bate di pahaul*. The *pyaras* take an iron bowl (*bata*), and put water and *patasas* (sugar puffs) in it. They stir the water with a *khand* (double edged sword) while reciting hymns. The popular name of this water sanctified by hymns is *amrit*.

After the candidates receive *amrit*, they are given *karah parshad*, (pudding) to eat jointly from the same bowl as brothers and sisters.

The significance of this eating together from a common bowl can be comprehended only by those who have experienced the inhuman treatment of the so-called

low castes in India. A high caste person considers himself polluted if he touches a member of the low caste. Any one who wants to be a Sikh has not only to give up the caste mentality but also to be willing to eat with other castes to re-kindle the feeling of the equality of humanity. Accepting *amrit* means that the person has rejected caste. Such a person must not treat any other human beings as superior or inferior and agrees to the philosophy of the fellowship of humanity.

Since all Sikhs have the same additions to their names, "Singh" for males and "Kaur" for females, any person not already having this name must change. For example, Alam Khan becomes Alam Singh, and Ram Devi becomes Ram Kaur. Persons may also choose a new first name if they so desire.

A Sikh and especially an *amritdhari* Sikh is enjoined always to lead a virtuous life. For this purpose, some specific do's and don'ts are prescribed for them. They include daily reciting of the prescribed hymns, meditating on the Name of God, honest living and the wearing at all times of the Five K's.

Sikhs are forbidden to cut hair from any part of the body, to eat halal (kutha) meat, adultery and to use tobacco.

A Sikh becomes an apostate if he/she commits any of these prohibited acts. In such a case the Sikh has to appear before the *panj pyaras* and explain the reasons for his/her sinful act. The *pyaras* discuss the matter and decide the punishment, which is usually doing some kind of service (*sewa*) in *langar* or gurdwara and reciting

specific hymns for a certain number of days. This is done to develop the required commitment to the Sikh vows and devotion to the faith.

(3) Marriage

The Sikh marriage ceremony is called *anand karaj* (a happy function). It was legally accepted in India through the *Anand Marriage Act* of 1909 during the British period. A Sikh may marry a Sikh only. The definition of a Sikh has already been given above.

The spouse may belong to any race or caste. Before marriage the bride and groom are expected to have formally embraced the Sikh faith. If one is not a born Sikh, it is good if the person lives the life of a Sikh for a reasonable period before he/she marries a Sikh.

When a boy and a girl, who have come of age, have willingly, without any kind of pressure, agreed to marry each other, the parents may arrange their wedding. Before fixing the marriage date, an engagement ceremony may be held which allows time to the girl and boy to understand each other better, to develop feelings of affection for each other, and to prepare themselves emotionally for their new life.

The old practice of going to a Brahmin (*purohit*) for finding out the auspicious date and time for the engagement, wedding or any other ceremony is prohibited. The concerned parties sit together and decide on a mutually convenient date and time for the function.

The wedding is held in the presence of **Guru Granth Sahib** in a gurdwara, in the house of the bride's parents, or in any other suitable place. The groom and the

bride sit in front of the holy scripture for the ceremony. To receive God's blessings, hymns are sung by the congregation. Addressing the groom and the bride, the priest, or any other competent person, explains the roles of husband and wife, and the "do's" and "don't's" of a virtuous Sikh life. The two are asked to bow before the **Guru Granth Sahib** as a token of their consent to the marriage.

The priest calls the father or the guardian of the bride to come forward and hand to her one end of a scarf of about five feet in length which has been held by the groom for the ceremony. This is comparable to "giving away the bride" in a traditional Christian wedding.

As the four hymns prescribed for the occasion are read, the couple walks once around **Guru Granth Sahib** for each hymn. The groom slowly leads the bride who holds the scarf.

The ceremony concludes with a prayer requesting the Almighty to shower blessings on the couple and guide them to live the right kind of life. After an elaborate meal offered to the wedding party, the couple goes to the house of the groom's parents.

(4) Death

According to Sikh philosophy, a person comes to this world when he/she is sent here by God. When called back by God, the person leaves the world in obedience to the order. A human life is a chance to do good deeds by loving the Creator and serving the people. When a Sikh dies, the relatives and friends are supposed not to cry but to recite hymns from their holy scripture. The hymns

chosen for this time remind the listeners that life is a temporary phase. The people should promise themselves to live a life of love and service to society.

When it is known that a person is nearing death or has died, recitation of the Sikh scripture is started. This creates a serene and holy environment. The hymns help the listeners to bear the death calmly. Friends gather to listen to the recitation and to console the relatives of the deceased.

Some persons are deputed to make arrangements for the cremation. Meanwhile close family members and selected friends bathe the dead body and dress it in new clothes. Before the funeral procession leaves the house, people pay their last respects to the departed person.

A prayer is offered to God to graciously excuse all the sins the person might have committed while alive and to admit the soul into god's court. The body, wrapped in clothes and not enclosed in a casket, is placed on a bier and carried to the cremation ground on the shoulders of at least four relatives and friends, or in a vehicle if the distance to be covered is long.

The pyre, with the body placed upon it, is lit by a close relative, usually a son, brother or father of the deceased. While the pyre is burning the people sit nearby and recite hymns. When the fire spreads and consumes the corpse, a departing prayer is recited and people return to their homes.

On the third day, when the cinders have cooled, ashes and residual bones are collected and thrown in the nearest flowing stream of water, or, possibly, buried in the

ground with the surface levelled and no mark or stone left to indicate the spot. This circumvents grave worship, which is prohibited in Sikhism.

The bereaved family arranges a complete recitation of **Guru Granth Sahib**. The relatives and friends visit in the evening to express their sympathy to the members of the family. On the day fixed for the final function, the recitation of the scriptures is completed and the final prayer recited.

After this prayer, called *antim ardas*, no other ceremony is performed for the departed person. However, influenced by the Hindu majority, some Sikhs conduct a memorial recitation and singing of hymns during the twelfth month after a death. This practice is not approved by *Sikh Rehat Maryada*.

In the West, the dead body is kept in a crematorium. On the day of cremation the body is put in a box, visitors file past, prayers are recited, and then it is cremated. According to the Sikh philosophy the body may be buried, cremated, or thrown in water. Any convenient and respectful method may adopted for the disposal of the body. It does not help or harm the soul. In His court one is judged only by the deeds done by the person while living on this earth and not by the method of disposal of the dead body.

Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh



Forms and Ceremonies in Sikhs

This institution of the Khalsa entails a certain additional disciplinary outfit in the shape of forms and vows, which are often misunderstood. It is true that if religion were only a matter of individual concern, there would be no need of forms and ceremonies. But religion, as taught by the Gurus, is a force that not only enables individuals to be disciplined but also binds them together to work for nobility in the world.. Discipline keeps up the spirit of individuals against relaxation in times of trial and maintains their loyalty to the cause even in moments of ebb. This discipline, or what is called *esprit de corps*, is secured by such devices as flags, drills and uniforms in armies, and certain forms and ceremonies in religion. Uniformity is an essential part of them. They create the necessary enthusiasm by appealing to imagination and sentiment, and work for it in moments of depression. They are a real aid to religion, which is essentially a thing of sentiment.

These forms should be related to his inner belief as words are to their meaning. Forms are the art of

religion. Like Art in relation to Nature, these forms impose certain limitations on the ideal, but at the same time they make the ideal more real and workable for general use.

But the Sikh forms were not conceived in a spirit of exclusiveness, or as essential to the advancement of individual souls. They were simply appointed to serve as aids to the preservation of the Panthic life of the community, and any man who likes to serve humanity through the Sikh Panth can wear them.

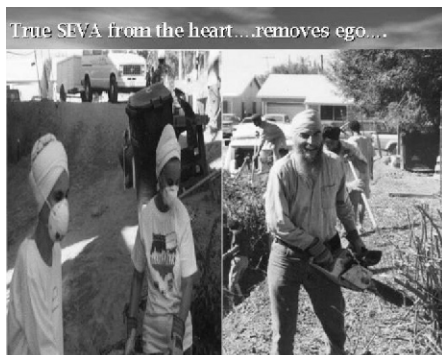
As is God, so is the Guru; and as is the Guru, so must be the follower. Wearing a Kachhera ensuring briskness of movement at times of action and serving as an easy underwear at times of rest, and iron Kara on his right arm as a sign of sternness and constraint and a sword by his side as an instrument of defence, offence, and as an emblem of power and dignity, the Guru presented an impressive picture of a simple but disciplined soldier. He, however, combined in him the saintliness of the old Rishis with the sternness and strength of a knight. Therefore, like his predecessors, he kept long hair, which all the world over have always been associated with saintliness. A comb was a simple necessity for keeping the hair clean and tidy. These are the forms which are given to the Sikhs invested at the time of their initiation to the Khalsa in order to look exactly like their master, as they are to behave exactly like him.

From the history of Sikhs in the past as well as in the present, it is quite evident how effectively these articles of faith and forms, with the accompanying vows of purity, love and service, have aided them in keeping

themselves united and their ideals unsullied even in times of the greatest trial. While keeping the Sikhs associated with their Guru and maintaining his spirit amongst them, they have not produced any narrowing effect on their beliefs or modes of worship. All kinds of worships and ceremonies, whether at Gurdwara or home, whether on birth, marriage or death, consists of nothing else but praying and chanting hymns. Could anything be simpler?

Prin. Teja Singh





Uplift of Man Based on Character

Can there be worship without good actions?

This life of praise is not to be of idle mysticism, but of active service done in the midst of worldly relations. "There can be no worship without good actions." These actions, however, are not to be formal deeds of so-called merit, but should be inspired by an intense desire to please God and to serve fellow-men.

You won't get a place there for all your bathing and wandering in different places. They cannot satisfy the conditions of that world.

Are you a reciter of all the four Vedas? There is no room for you there. With all your correct reading, if you don't understand one thing that matters, you only bother yourself.

Nanak says, if you exert yourself in action, you will be saved. Serve your God and remember Him, leaving all your pride of self.

The Gurus laid the foundation of man's uplift, not on such short-cuts as mantras, miracles or mysteries, but on man's own character, his own virtues already formed

which help us in moral crisis. Life is like a cavalry march. The officer of a cavalry on march has to decide very quickly when to turn his men left or right. he cannot wait until his men are actually on the brink of a nulla or khud. He must decide long before that. In the same way, when face to face with an evil, we have to decide quickly. Temptations allow us no time to think. They always come suddenly. When offered a bribe, we have to decide at once what course of action we are going to take. We cannot then consult a religious book or moral guide. We must decide according to our impulse. And this can be done only if virtue has so entered into our disposition that we are habitually drawn towards it, and evil has got no attraction for us. Without securing virtue sufficiently in character, even some of the so-called great men have been known to fall an easy prey to temptation. It was for this reason that for the formation of character the Gurus did not think it sufficient to lay down rules of conduct in a book; they also thought it necessary to train people for a continuous course of schooling in wisdom and experience, spread over many generations, before they could be sure that the people thus trained had acquired a character of their own. This is the reason why in Sikhism there have been ten founders, instead of only one.

Prin. Teja Singh





Nam Simran - Meditation

The philosophy of *Nam Simran* (meditation) and *Jap* (repetition of a *mantra*) is very old and is in vogue in all religions. Of course, the point of concentration, words used, methods followed, postures adopted, etc., differ in different cultures. In India yogis and *rishis* are known to leave their homes and go to calm quiet places in forests, hills, snowy mountains, lakes etc., for this purpose.

Purpose of Nam Simran

The most important and common purpose, a sacred one, is to realize the Reality, the Truth, the Almighty and thereby achieve *moksh*, freedom from the cycle of birth and death. This is preached as a mission of life by the majority of the Indian faiths. This means the soul secures a permanent place in Heaven and is saved from the problems and pains of repeated births and deaths; at the same time, one enjoys peace during his life here in the world.

Another objective, which is mostly preached by

the *tantrics* is getting fulfilled some worldly wishes, removing the influence of some bad, unsuitable star combinations, recovering from diseases, personal success in life, protection from the enemies, and some times to do harm to them, etc.

According to a Sikh scholar, Prof Teja Singh the purpose of human life is to practice *dharma*, an ideal and proper way of living this life. It is possible by reciting *gurbani*, understanding it and living accordingly and at the same time doing *Nam Simran*. The mission of Sikh *dharma* is not *moksh* or *mukti* which entitles one to *swarg*, Heaven (a mythical place somewhere in the cosmos) but to develop in us which is God

ਦਰ ਦਰਸਨ ਕਾ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮੁ ਹੋਵੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਬੈਕੁੰਠੈ ਕਰੈ ਕਿਆ ॥

(SGGS Page 360)

Regarding *Simran* (reflecting on God), the Sikh *Rehat Maryada* published by the S.G.P.C., Amritsar, states (Page 8):

A Sikh should get up in ambrosial hours (amrit vela) 3 hours before sunrise, take bath and concentrating his/her thoughts on one Immortal Being, Akal Purkh, repeat the name of Waheguru (Wondrous Destroyer of ignorance)

Importance of Nam Simran

The most important mission of human life, as preached by *gurbani*, is to keep one's mind always tuned to Him, His virtues. God is *Nirankar* without any physical features; therefore, whenever *gurbani* tells to remember him, it means to tune one's mind to his virtues. These instructions are given in a *Nitnem (Rehras)* hymn.

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥
 ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥
 ਅਵਰਿ ਕਾਜ ਤੇਰੈ ਕਿਤੈ ਨ ਕਾਮ ॥
 ਮਿਲੁ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਭਜੁ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮ ॥ (SGGS page 12)

In simple words, it means that to bring peace to the soul, the life of a Sikh (while earning his living and performing other chores of life) is to be lived with his mind always tuned to the virtues of the Lord, our benevolent Father; the hymn also tells that other activities are of little use for providing peace; (they help only to maintain and entertain our physical body, which, anyway, we are going to leave here to become dust again).

This is being written to discuss *gurmat Nam Simran* without any influence of the practice of such Hindu rituals which have entered the Sikh psyche. It is based according to the teachings and directions given in *gurbani*, not according to what is preached by saints and *gianis* because of the influence of old tradition.

Bhai Kahn Singh, in his book *Gurmat Martand*, published by the S.G.P.C., Amritsar, explains *gurmat Nam Simran*, and *Jap*. He specifically states that it is different from the traditional *simran*, both in philosophy and method of *simran*. He states the word *mantar* means advice, guidance, suggestion, instruction, etc. The word *Mantri*, therefore, means one who gives advice, guidance, etc. to the king, the ruler for keeping peace in the kingdom.

Gurmantar Nam: It is a holy advice, guidance (instructions), given by a Guru to his disciple for achieving peace and the spiritual mission of human life. His advice helps the disciples to live successfully according to the proper way of life instead of going off the

track and suffering from pain and problems.

However, *tantrics* have a different meaning of the word *mantar*; for them it is a secret and magical word given by the Guru (*tantric*) to his disciple and it is not to be revealed to any one, otherwise it loses its magical power (charms). Such a word is told to a disciple when he wants to get something done for his mundane benefit, advantage. This may mean getting rid of any pending danger, a problem or some other adverse situation. This may also be done to fulfill a worldly desire to earn more money, success in life, family problem etc. Sometimes a *mantar* is given with the purpose of hurting the enemies, making them sick, blind or go mad.

The scholar states that in *gurmat* this whole *mantar* philosophy is prohibited. *Gurmantar* is guidance given by the Guru to a Sikh for leading one's life, the way it is expected to help a devotee for realizing the Lord. *Gurbani* mentions the message in the following words :

ਭਈ ਪਰਾਪਤਿ ਮਾਨੁਖ ਦੇਹੁਰੀਆ ॥
 ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਮਿਲਣ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਰੀਆ ॥
 ਅਵਰਿ ਕਾਜ ਤੇਰੈ ਕਿਤੈ ਨ ਕਾਮ ॥
 ਮਿਲੁ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਭਜੁ ਕੇਵਲ ਨਾਮ ॥ (SGGS Page 12)

The purpose of understanding and practising this *gurmantar* (not just repeating some word) in one's life is to treat the 'disease', the vice of *haume*. This 'disease' ruins the lives of many people and results in many un-treatable sufferings. *Gurbani* states that though, '*haume*' is a very serious and damaging 'disease' but it can be treated. The medicine prescribed for this malady is '*Sabd*'. By the grace of the Guru, if one understands *sabd*, *Nam*, *gurbani* and practices its message to lead his life; he surely can get rid of the disease because *haume* cannot go into a mind

which is occupied by love of *Nam*, virtues

ਹਉਮੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਵਿਰੋਧੁ ਹੈ ਦੁਇ ਨ ਵਸਹਿ ਇਕ ਠਾਇ ॥

(SGGS Page 560)

ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀਰਘ ਰੋਗੁ ਹੈ ਦਾਰੂ ਭੀ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ॥

ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰੇ ਜੇ ਆਪਣੀ ਤਾ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥

(SGGS Page 466)

Those scholars who study *gurbani* and interpret it without reference to the traditional views or the *yoga* teachings, they find that *gurmat Nam Simran* is to love and reflect on *Akal Purkh*, His virtues, all the time. This simple way of loving His virtues and convincing one's mind to respect and practice those virtues in one's daily life and to get rid of vices, has been confused with the rejected traditional *yoga* rituals. The only difference taught is that yogic *mantra* is replaced with the *Waheguru* word, whereas *gurbani* rejects the whole *yoga* philosophy lock, stock and barrel.

ਜੋਗੀ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਅੰਧੁ ॥

(SGGS Page 662)

NAM SIMRAN EXPLAINED

The Famous Sikh scholar, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha, has written *Gurmat Martand*, published by the S.G.P.C., Amritsar, in two volumes. In it he has given the *gurmat* meaning of different words in alphabetical order and the philosophy involved there in. Under the title *Nam Simran*, he states (Page 620) *Waheguru* is the most sacred word and a Sikh should do its *simran*, reflecting on His virtues with complete concentration of mind. He cautioned that unless one understood, 'What is Nam?', repetition of the word *Waheguru*, has little utility to that person.

To explain that the true concept of *Nam Simran* in

gurmat is different from the old concept of *Nam Simran*, he gives examples of some words which have their different meanings in *gurbani* than their traditional meanings. He points out that the meaning and connotation of words changes in different cultures and even in the same culture over a period of time. Therefore, while describing *gurmat* notion of *Nam Simran*, we must clearly know its concept in *gurmat* philosophy (*gurbani*). The two words, *Nam* and *Simran*, have a different meaning than those which were popular earlier in *Yoga* or Hindu religion. To explain it, the author refers to some common words whose old meanings were different than those for which they have been used in *gurbani*. A few of them are given below:

Narain (ਨਾਰਾਇਣ) Old scripture - The God which resides in water. *Gurbani* - The Almighty Being, God, who prevails everywhere.

Similarly we know that *Allah*, *Ram Bhagwan* have different meanings in *gurbani* than those meanings these words have in the old scriptures. Similarly, the traditional words *maya*, *dan*, *pun*, *nam*, *simran* etc. have been used in *gurbani* with new meanings to fit in the *gurmat* philosophy. The scholar cautions us that if we adopt old concept of these words, there is great likelihood of our misinterpreting the message of *gurbani*.

A more often misunderstood example is of four *Khanis* (ਖਾਣੀਆਂ), sources of life. In *Jap Ji* (*Pauri* 27), it is stated ਗਾਵਹਿ ਜੋਧ ਮਹਾਬਲ ਸੂਰਾ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਖਾਣੀ ਚਾਰੇ ॥, four *khanies* sing your virtues. Here it does not mean four sources of life only. This belief of four *khanies* was rejected right there in *Jap Ji* itself, *Pauri* 32 ਕੇਤੀਆ ਖਾਣੀ ਕੇਤੀਆ ਬਾਣੀ ਕੇਤੇ ਪਾਤ ਨਰਿੰਦ ॥ ਕੇਤੀਆ ਸੁਰਤੀ ਸੇਵਕ ਕੇਤੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਅੰਤੁ ॥ (Page

7) It is stated that there are innumerable sources of life, and we cannot know their counts. Whenever the word four *khanis* or 84 lakh kinds of lives are mentioned in *gurbani*, they mean all living beings, and their numbers are beyond our comprehension.

In old concept, *Nam* is a secret word (or a set of words) as mentioned earlier, it is usually a *mantra*, therefore, a person is warned not to reveal it to any other person. It is to be repeated at a prescribed time and in specified counts while sitting in a specific posture. The person has a particular worldly purpose for doing that *Simran*.

However, in *gurmat*, it has a totally different and spiritual objective of remembering virtues of God as mentioned above. Also, *Nam* refers to (*Gurmat Martand* Page 23-28) that Entity which is the cause of whole creation who also takes care of this creation, it is not just a four letter word, *Waheguru*.

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥ (SGGS Page 284)

Further *Gurbani* directs us to perform our duty (*dharma*) to understand and reflect on the virtues of God, it also means that we should adopt those virtues in our life to the extent possible, otherwise human life becomes meaningless.

ਸਗਲ ਸਰੀਰ ਆਵਤ ਸਭ ਕਾਮ ॥
ਨਿਹਵਲ ਮਾਨੁਖੁ ਜਪੈ ਨਹੀ ਨਾਮ ॥੩॥ (SGGS Page 190)

ਕਣ ਬਿਨਾ ਜੈਸੇ ਬੋਥਰ ਤੁਖਾ ॥
ਨਾਮ ਬਿਹੂਨ ਸੂਨੇ ਸੇ ਮੁਖਾ ॥੧॥ (SGGS Page 192)

ਜਾ ਮੈ ਭਜਨੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੋ ਨਾਹੀ ॥
ਤਿਹ ਨਰ ਜਨਮੁ ਅਕਾਰਥੁ ਖੋਇਆ
ਯਹ ਰਾਖਹੁ ਮਨ ਮਾਰੀ ॥੧॥ (SGGS Page 831)

Not only *Nam*, but also *Simran* in *gurbani* has a

different connotation than that found in Hindi literature. Prof. Teja Singh, a Sikh scholar, in his book *Sikh Dharam* (Punjabi) published by the S.G.P.C., Amritsar states:

Some scholars mistakenly equated these words (*Nam* & *Simran*) with their old concepts, and they got wrong interpretations. Guru Nanak preached that God has no specific name (*Nam*). Therefore, he used simply the word *Nam* to refer to Him and His virtues. Hindus believe authority of God is divided into three sub-Gods, - Vishnu, Brahma, Mahesh - or it is believed to be the whole nature. The Semitic faiths believe that God lives somewhere far away in the cosmos.

However, Guru Nanak revealed a unique God. He is merely an embodiment of virtues (no physical feature ਨਿਰਗੁਣ); He is reflected in the whole universe but is independent of His creation. This means that he is both transcendent and immanent at the same time.

ਨਿਰਗੁਨੁ ਆਪਿ ਸਰਗੁਨੁ ਭੀ ਓਹੀ ॥
ਕਲਾ ਧਾਰਿ ਜਿਨਿ ਸਗਲੀ ਮੋਹੀ ॥ (SGGS Page 287)
ਘਟ ਘਟ ਮੈ ਹਰਿ ਜੂ ਬਸੈ ਸੰਤਨ ਕਹਿਓ ਪੁਕਾਰਿ ॥
(SGGS Page 1427)

Some examples, which show that *Nam* has wider concept than a four letter word are given below.

ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਛਤੀਹ ਪਰਕਾਰ
ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਇਐ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਤ੍ਰਿਪਤਿ ਭਈ ॥
ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਪੈਨਣੁ ਜਿਤੁ ਫਿਰਿ ਨੰਗੇ ਨ
ਹੋਵਹ ਹੋਰ ਪੈਨਣ ਕੀ ਹਮਾਰੀ ਸਰਧ ਗਈ ॥
(SGGS Page 593)

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਗਲੇ ਜੰਤ ॥
ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਖੰਡ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ ॥
ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਬੇਦ ਪੁਰਾਨ ॥

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸੁਨਨ ਗਿਆਨ ਧਿਆਨ ॥

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਆਗਾਸ ਪਾਤਾਲ ॥

ਨਾਮ ਕੇ ਧਾਰੇ ਸਗਲ ਆਕਾਰ ॥ (SGGS Page 287)

Thus *Gurbani* uses *Nam*, as a synonym of the Almighty Creator and His Virtues; *Nam* does not mean a name of four letters, *Waheguru*,

ਜੇਤਾ ਕੀਤਾ ਤੇਤਾ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਵਿਣੁ ਨਵੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕੋ ਥਾਉ ॥ (SGGS Page 4)

ਵਡੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਜਾ ਵਡਾ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਵਡੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਜਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਿਆਉ ॥ (SGGS Page 463)

Here '*Nam*' means His virtues, by no stretch of imagination, it can mean the four letter word '*Waheguru*'. (Page 833)

ਸਾਚਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਾਚੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਜਾਨੈ ॥ (SGGS Page 833)

The hymn means that we can understand (ਨਾਮ), virtues of God, through *gurbani*.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਮੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਵਸਾਈ ॥ (SGGS Page 1239)

Again *gurbani* has been equated with *Nam*, which is to be loved by a Sikh to understand and get influence of *Nam* soaked in one's life.

A very interesting hymn states that *Nam* & *gurbani* are synonyms ਹਉ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਕਰਉ ॥ (SGGS Page 369) I sing His *Nam* (that means *gurbani*) all the time.

In *Sukhmani*, the third *slok* and the whole related *ashtpadi* discuss uniqueness and greatness of *Nam*.

ਬਹੁ ਸਾਸਤ੍ਰੁ ਬਹੁ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤੀ ਪੇਖੇ ਸਰਬ ਵਢੋਲਿ ॥

ਪੂਜਸਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਹਰਿ ਹਰੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਅਮੋਲ ॥੧॥

(SGGS Page 265)

It means that *Nam*, virtues of God (obviously, in

this hymn *slok* also, it can not be any word) are priceless; compared to it, the *Simrities* or the *Shastras* (the Hindu scriptures) have little value. In the *ashtpadi* following the *slok*, the hymn makes it clear that *Nam* refers to virtues of God.

ਨਿਰਧਨ ਕਉ ਧਨੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਉ ॥

ਨਿਥਾਵੇ ਕਉ ਨਾਉ ਤੇਰਾ ਥਾਉ ॥ (SGGS Page 266)

The above interpretation of *Nam* has been again emphatically endorsed in the

ਮਨ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਕੀ ਮਹਿਮਾ ਉਚ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮਿ ਉਧਰੇ ਪਤਿਤ ਬਹੁ ਮੂਚ ॥੩॥ (SGGS Page 265)

In simple words it tells that innumerable individuals have been saved by virtues of *Nam*, which are of greatest value/significance.

ASikh should everyday tune his mind to *Nam*, His virtues. He elaborates it further that whatever abstract description of God is mentioned in the invocation

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ

ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ (SGGS page 1)

is expressed through one word *Nam*. The utility of repeating the "*Waheguru*" word lies in understanding and benefiting from those virtues, otherwise just repeating the word with millions of tongues and millions of times is futile.

ਇਕ ਦੂ ਜੀਭੋ ਲਖ ਹੋਹਿ ਲਖ ਹੋਵਹਿ ਲਖ ਵੀਸ ॥

ਲਖੁ ਲਖੁ ਗੋਤਾ ਆਖੀਅਹਿ ਏਕੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਗਦੀਸ ॥

ਏਤੁ ਰਾਹਿ ਪਤਿ ਪਵੜੀਆ ਚੜੀਐ ਹੋਇ ਇਕੀਸ ॥

ਸੁਣਿ ਗਲਾ ਆਕਾਸ ਕੀ ਕੀਟਾ ਆਈ ਰੀਸ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰੀ ਪਾਈਐ ਕੂੜੀ ਕੂੜੈ ਠੀਸ ॥ (SGGS page 7)

It is His grace alone which can grant His virtues to

the a seeker so that one can realize the Lord. Also,

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰਿ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ ਤਾ ਨਾਮ ਧਨੁ ਪਲੈ ਪਾਇ ॥

(SGGS Page 850)

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ ਸੋ ਪਾਏ ॥

(SGGS Page 468)

ਨਾਨਕ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇ ਸੋ ਬੁਝੈ ਸੋ ਜਨੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਏ ॥

(SGGS Page 732)

We wrongly accept those meanings of the *gurbani* words which were used in ancient literature but were rejected in *gurmat* philosophy. *Nam* & *Simran* are two such words which have a high spiritual value and have different meanings than their old concepts. Guru Arjun Dev has used the word *Nam* in the concluding hymn of Sri Guru Granth Sahib to refer to the whole *gurbani* in the scripture.

ਬਾਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਤਿੰਨਿ ਵਸਤੁ ਪਈਓ ਸਤੁ ਸੰਤੋਖੁ ਵੀਚਾਰੋ ॥

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਕਾ ਪਇਓ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਸਭਸੁ ਅਧਾਰੋ ॥

ਜੇ ਕੋ ਖਾਵੈ ਜੇ ਕੋ ਭੁੰਚੈ ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਹੋਇ ਉਧਾਰੋ ॥

(SGGS Page 1429)

The Same thing has been said by Guru Amar Das ji in different words-

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਵਰਤੀ ਜਗ ਅੰਤਰਿ

ਇਸੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਾਇਦਾ ॥ (SGGS Page 1066)

This hymn specifically tells that the true source of *Nam* (of course, not just a four letter word) are the teaching of *gurbani*, it means *gurbani* is the source of *Nam*.

Therefore, one cannot realize *Nam* without studying and understanding *Gurbani* (not with repetition of any word *ad infinitum*).

ਪੁੰਨ ਦਾਨ ਜਪ ਤਪ ਜੇਤੇ ਸਭ ਉਪਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ॥ (SGGS Page 401)

Love of *Nam* (*virtues*) is above all charity, good holy actions, meditation etc.

ਸਚਹੁ ਓਰੇ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਉਪਰਿ ਸਚੁ ਆਚਾਰੁ ॥ (SGGS Page 62)

Truth (*Nam*) is above all philosophies and truthful actions are superior to all religious rituals and activities.

To conclude his opinion, he quotes a hymn from Akal Ustat which specifically states the repetition of one word continuously for the whole life, like a bird (*Pudna*) which utters only the same sound all the time, will not let anyone to realize the Lord, because He is beyond it.

ਜਾਪ ਕੇ ਕੀਏ ਤੇ ਜਉ ਪੈ ਪਾਈਅਤ ਅਜਾਪ

ਦੇਵ ਪ੍ਰਦਨਾ ਸਦੀਵ ਤੁਹੀ ਤੁਹੀ ਉਚਰਤਿ ਹੈ ॥

The word *Simran* means to remember; it does not exclusively mean to repeat (do *jap* of) any word. This we can do all the time like a mother thinks of her baby while doing house chores or the way parents think of their son deputed to fight a war with the enemy far away at the border. When a child, remembers his mom, he does not utter mom, mom, mom but he feels delighted and remembers her for the favors, help and service done to him by her. Similarly keeping virtues of God and His favors in mind all the time is His *Simran*.

When we keep our mind tuned to the virtues of God, we will observe Him vibrating in the whole nature, keep His virtues in our mind, and feel that God is great and is beyond our imagination.

ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਵਸਿਆ ॥ ਤੇਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ ॥

(SGGS page 469)

Therefore, *Simran* is not a job of an hour or a day; it is that our mind remains always aware of the virtues of

God and His innumerable favors showered on us all the time and feels thankful to Him. This disconnects our mind from thinking ill of any person and hence it results in our peaceful life. It protects one from going astray from the path laid down for fruitful life of a devotee.

To draw conclusions from *Gurbani*, there is always a tendency to lean towards one or the other side under the influence of one's self-thinking. Because of this, Sikhs are divided and have mistakenly taken one of the two extreme views to be correct, totally ignoring the other aspect.

(i) *Gurbani* tells that one should prefer intensive *Nam Simran*; it is not essential to read *Gurbani* again and again if one obeys its directions and does *Nam Simran* regularly. We find such Sikhs instead of singing a complete *sabd* for the listener (permit him to understand the complete message of the hymn), halfway they start chanting '*Waheguru*'. This does not give due regard for the *gurbani kirtan*

(ii) The other view taken by some Sikhs is that instead of uttering *Waheguru*, we should sing *kirtan*, that is, recite *gurbani* only. Its meaning should be understood and one should act according to the directions of *gurbani*. One is judged only by his deeds in His court.

ਅਮਲ ਜਿ ਕੀਤਿਆ ਦੁਨੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਸੇ ਦਰਗਹ ਓਗਾਹਾ ॥

(SGGS Page 1383)

ਵੇਖਹੁ ਬੰਦਾ ਚਲਿਆ ਚਹੁ ਜਣਿਆ ਦੈ ਕੰਨਿ ॥

ਫਰੀਦਾ ਅਮਲ ਜਿ ਕੀਤੇ ਦੁਨੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਦਰਗਹ ਆਏ ਕੰਮਿ ॥

(SGGS Page 1383)

Quite often comments of Guru Nanak made to the Mullans at Mecca and quoted by Bhai Gurdas are mentioned to support this view.

ਪੁਛਨ ਗਲ ਈਮਾਨ ਦੀ ਕਾਜੀ ਮੁਲਾਂ ਇਕਠੇ ਹੋਈ ॥

ਵਡਾ ਸਾਂਗ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ਲਖ ਨ ਸਕੇ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕੋਈ ॥

ਪੁਛਣ ਖੋਲ ਕਿਤਾਬ ਨੂੰ ਵਡਾ ਹਿੰਦੂ ਕੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨੋਈ ॥

ਬਾਬਾ ਆਖੇ ਹਾਜ਼ੀਆਂ ਸੁਭ ਅਮਲਾਂ ਬਾਝੇ ਦੋਵੇਂ ਹੋਈ ॥

(ਵਾਰ:੧, ਪਉੜੀ ੩੩)

Therefore, they conclude that *Nam Simran* means to remember virtues of God at all times and accordingly doing good deeds as directed by *Gurbani*. They observe that *Waheguru jap* is not a *gurmata* tradition and is not endorsed by *gurbani*.

The balanced view of complete message of *gurbani* is mentioned in *Rehat Maryada* (Page- 8), the word *Waheguru* has been adopted by the Panth/Gurus for addressing Akal Purkh. We benefit by loving God as *Waheguru* and, of course, not by repeating this particular word without understanding its meaning.

Let me quote one worldly example to explain this. We use many names for our father; they include dad, daddy, *papa*, *bhapa*, *pita*, *baap* (*bapu*), (the latter two are mentioned in *gurban*)*i*. Whichever name a child picks up, he/she continues to use that name because his/her love for the father is associated with it. Other names are not wrong but they do not touch the emotions of the person. Similarly Sikhs adopted *Waheguru* name for Him and the emotional feeling and peace they enjoy by the use of this word, they do not get the same from the use of other words, Ram, Allah, Bhagwan, Niranjana etc., though all refer to the same entity, Akal Purkh.

The gurmata directions for *Nam simran* are that everyday in the early morning, one must think of the virtues of God while uttering *waheguru* word so that mind enjoys the love of His virtues. However, Reading/ listening recitation of *gurbani*, listening its *kirtan*, and its

katha explain virtues of God; all such acts help one to keep one's mind on his virtues and favors. They motivate one to be thankful to the Lord for His favors and thus keep Him in one's mind and thoughts.

Realizing Nam - Gurbani Directions

1. One may realize *Nam* by keeping his attention immersed in *gurbani* while listening to hymns and directing one's life accordingly.

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਸੁਣਿ ਮੈਲੁ ਗਵਾਏ ॥
ਸਹਜੇ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਮੰਨਿ ਵਸਾਏ ॥ (SGGS Page 665)
ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ ਜੇ ਜੀਅਹੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਰਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਾ ॥
(SGGS Page 797)

2. O' God, I am desirous to sing hymns day and night so that I am blessed with *Nam*. I pray, please, do not let my mind wander away from You (Your virtues).

ਵਿਸਰੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਦਾਤਾਰ ਆਪਣਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਦੇਹੁ ॥
ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਾ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਚਾਉ ਏਹੁ ॥ (SGGS Page 762)

3. One can achieve the supreme goal of human life, *jiwan mukt*, to become free from the vices and attachments while alive, by singing *gurbani* and keeping away from ego.

ਮਾਨ ਮੋਹ ਦੋਨੋ ਕਉ ਪਰਹਰਿ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਕੇ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵੈ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕਹਾਵੈ ॥
(SGGS Page 831)

4. One can get rid of ego and love *Nam* by imbibing the message of *gurbani*, not just by the sight of the Guru. Page-594.

ਡਿਠੈ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜਿਚਰੁ ਸਬਦਿ ਨ ਕਰੇ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ॥
(SGGS Page 594)

5. *Gurbani* directs a seeker to join a *sangat* (get

into the company of the *sants*, holy people) sing his virtues and achieve the mission of this valuable human life.

ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਕਰਹੁ ਅਨੰਦ ॥
ਗੁਣ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪਰਮਾਨੰਦ ॥ (SGGS Page 293)

6. To end our birth-death cycle and to qualify to be admitted in his court, we should sing his virtues day and night (all the time) keeping Him in our mind.

ਹਰਿ ਦਿਨੁ ਰੈਨਿ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਗਾਈਐ ॥
ਬਹੁੜਿ ਨ ਜੋਨੀ ਪਾਈਐ ॥ (SGGS Page 623)

7. To get merged with Him, one should sing His praises and delve in His virtues.

ਸਦਾ ਅਨੰਦਿ ਰਹਹਿ ਦਿਨੁ ਰਾਤੀ
ਗੁਣ ਕਹਿ ਗੁਣੀ ਸਮਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ (SGGS Page 122)

These above mentioned hymns explain that *Nam Simran* means to sing his virtues, understand them and to act accordingly. Thereby we should get rid of our ego to let our mind enjoy the love of *Nam*. *Nam* occupies a mind and enlightens it only when it is free from ego.

ਹਉਮੈ ਨਾਵੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਵਿਰੋਧੁ ਹੈ ਦੁਇ ਨ ਵਸਹਿ ਇਕ ਠਾਇ ॥
(SGGS Page 560)

Cautions

Whereas *gurbani* explains the philosophy of *Nam Simran*, it rejects the traditional actions done for the purpose. It makes it clear that the continuous repetition of a particular word gives little benefit to the mind.

It tells that (i) instead of *jap*, *tap*, *sanjam* and other rituals, a devotee should sing *Hari kirtan*, Gods virtues.

ਜਪ ਤਪ ਸੰਜਮ ਕਰਮ ਧਰਮ ਹਰਿ ਕੀਰਤਨੁ ਜਨਿ ਗਾਇਓ ॥
(SGGS Page 498)

(ii) Many persons repeat a word with their tongue but *Nam* is realized by listening to the message of Guru (*gurbani*) and obeying it.

ਰਸਨਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ਕਹੈ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸੇਵੇ ਤਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਲਹੈ ॥

(SGGS Page 1262)

Some Sikhs, because of ignorance of this message of *gurbani*, believe that *Nam simran* is mere repetition of the word *Waheguru*. This belief is found not to be possible when we read some hymns relating to *Nam Simran*. Here are a few of them

(i) Nanak lives because he does *jap* of His *charan*, feet.

ਅਸਥਿਰੁ ਭਗਤਿ ਸਾਧ ਕੀ ਸਰਨ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਪਿ ਜਪਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਚਰਨ ॥ (SGGS Page 268)

(ii) The hymn says to do *jap* of *gyan*, knowledge.

ਐਸਾ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਜਪਹੁ ਮਨ ਮੇਰੇ ॥

ਹੋਵਹੁ ਚਾਕਰ ਸਾਚੇ ਕੇਰੇ ॥ (SGGS Page-728)

Here the directions of *gurbani* for doing *jap* of *charan* or *gyan* is not possible to be practised because they are not words, which one can repeat with his tongue. Actually the message of the hymn is learning the virtues of God and practising humility in mind. This is also endorsed in *gurbani* by a different hymn.

ਕਾਂਇਆ ਸਾਧੈ ਉਰਧ ਤਪੁ ਕਰੈ ਵਿਚਹੁ ਹਉਮੈ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਅਧਿਆਤਮ ਕਰਮ ਜੇ ਕਰੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਨ ਕਬ ਹੀ ਪਾਇ ॥

ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਸੈ ਮਨਿ ਆਇ ॥

(SGGS Page 33)

Haume, ego, cannot be got rid of by cleaning the body or doing extreme meditation. Religious rituals are of no use for realizing *Nam*. *Nam* enters the mind only

when one becomes extremely humble.

Gurbani also specifically tells that repeating a word with our tongue even if it refers to God, is of no utility.

ਰਾਮ ਰਾਮ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਕਹੈ ਕਹਿਐ ਰਾਮੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥

(SGGS Page 492)

Repeating a word for a particular number of times is not the *gurmat* philosophy as explained also by Bhai Gurdas (Var 39)

ਅਮਲੀ ਖਾਸੇ ਮਜਲਸੀ ਪਿਰਮੁ ਪਿਆਲਾ ਅਲਖੁ ਲਖਾਇਆ ॥

ਮਾਲਾ ਤਸਬੀ ਤੋੜਿ ਕੈ ਜਿਉ ਸਉ ਤਿਵੈ ਅਠੋਤਰੁ ਲਾਇਆ ॥

ਮੇਰੁ ਇਮਾਮੁ ਰਲਾਇ ਕੈ ਰਾਮੁ ਰਹੀਮੁ ਨ ਨਾਉਂ ਗਣਾਇਆ ॥

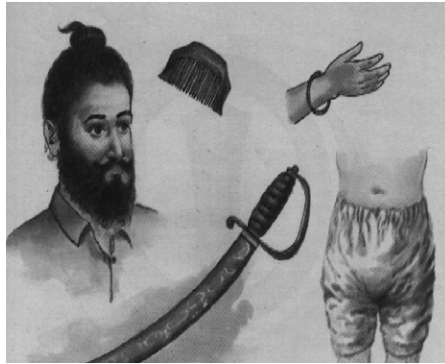
In the end, we can say that the directions of *gurbani* for *Nam Simran* ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣਾ, ਧਿਆਉਣਾ, ਸਿਮਰਨਾ, ਗੁਣ ਗਾਉਣਾ, ਉਸਤਤ ਕਰਨੀ। (meditating, devoted attention, repeating with full concentration appreciating Him, reflecting on his virtues etc.) all give the same message that one has to study *gurbani*, understand its message, convince one's mind to love God sincerely and lead one's life according to those directions. This path, with the grace of God, helps one to get rid of one's ego and keep his mind peaceful. Claiming any spiritual gain because one has repeated the word *Waheguru* a million times is meaningless because all acts of service done with ego have no value in His court.

ਹਉਮੈ ਵਡਾ ਗੁਬਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਬੁਝਿ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਕੋਇ ॥

(SGGS Page 560)

Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh





The Sword of Guru Gobind Singh

Kirpan is a gift from the Guru. It is not an instrument of offence or defence; it is mind made intense by the love of the Guru. The Sikh is to have a sword-like mind. The sword cuts so rapidly, the mind can do so much in an instant. It is but the symbol of the myriad personality of the Guru's Sikh, that knows no defeat, no disappointment, the personality, that is unconquerable in its hope, in its spiritual radiance. Guru Gobind Singh says, "I will make my one conquer a million. All conquests in the fields of life are mental and moral; physical conquests are no conquests. I think he, who wears the Guru's sword, is a spontaneous man fully grown in His Spirit, and is of His spirit. It is no use wearing His Sword, if one has not become wholly spiritual

When He touched my hair and blessed me, how could I bear my hair being shorn? I nestle the fragrance of His touch in my tresses. I am the bride. They, of the modern era, have bobbed the bride but the Sacred Braids of Christ still remain the most beautiful adornment of man's or woman's head. They say it is troublesome to

carry it. But more troublesome is a life of no inspiration. It is lack of love for God and for the Guru to think of the riddance of hair, the spiritual crown of humanity.

Iron kara worn on the wrist is a gift the Guru gave to us. Coming to us from our personal God, dearer to us than our mother, father, sister or sweetheart, it comes to us as His Gift, as His Blessing. Shame on us that we argue over and over again about it. He touched my hair, and I keep it; when I toss my arm up in the air and the iron Kara shines, I am reminded of His wrist that wore it - one exactly like his. We have to wear the Kara which is His gift, and we are the prisoners of Infinite love. These are the fetters of love; the price of our freedom. Each Sikh wears hair and the beard of Guru Gobind Singh. We are moulded in His own image.

Those who do not have that great personal love for the Guru are still out of the court. But our freedom is in Him and not anywhere without Him. These are not the symbols of a religion, nor essential rites of any religious discipline. They are the signs of our being "wedded women." They are the wedding gifts from the Bridegroom. He gave all these to us, and they are sacred.

Our Long Tresses

The Master washed them, combed them and bound them in a knot as the vow of the future manhood which shall know no caste, no distinction between man and man, and which shall work for the peace and amity of spiritual brotherhood. He who wears His knot of Hair is a brother of all men, freed of an ill-feeling of selfishness. He is to be on the bayonet's point to be of no separatist creed, no religion, nor of any national combine of men bent upon loot and plunder and the tyranny of subjugating other men.

We do not concern ourselves with the condition of

life. We grow like flowers on the thorny bed or velvet moss with equal joy, for facing Him and living in Him and breathing Him is our life. And all who desire to be Brothers of the Tress-knot of Guru Gobind Singh come and join. This is Life of Love, not of any other Truth. All other Truths are of no concern to us! We are now the *sangha* of the Tress-knot of Guru Gobind Singh, our purposes are as inscrutable as those of God of Destiny.

Those who do not care to observe the outer discipline of Keshas and other symbols are guilty of breaking the door and laying inside open to pilferage; while those who infringe the inner discipline are eating up the marrow.

Prof. Puran Singh



Sikh Social Order

In Sikhism man is the source of spirituality, Society is the centre of moral and creative action, and God is the end of all religious effort. The objective of Sikhism, as a way of life, is to create a spiritual kinship and unity between man and man, between man and God and between man and society, a Hindu, Muslim, Christian or a Jew. "All men are equal at social level, and on all God bestows His grace and bounty without discrimination."

The aim of Sikhism is to help the seeker of truth to discover within him the light of perfection, and the power of immanence, and realize God not only in sublime mystical experiences, but in the very life and existence of humanity. This world, for a Sikh, is neither an illusion nor a vale of sorrow from which man must run away, but the earth on which man lives, is a temple of righteous actions

"This world is the abode of Truth and the True one resides in it." The Sikh Gurus did not believe in any abstract and bloodless mysticism, but in a wide awake spirituality of healthy social, cultural and political wisdom. The Sikh Gurus did not train their disciples on

hill tops or on the banks of holy rivers, nor did they deliver their sermons in forest dwellings.

They trained them in the heart of humanity. They disciplined them in the world and in the strife and struggle of the battlefield. All this was done in the mental and spiritual universe of a newly created social order within the span of two hundred years. It was a social order in which the Brahmin could eat with the low caste, the Hindu would not run away from a Muslim calling him a *malecha*, and a Muslim did not dare to call a Hindu a *kafir*. The ideal man in this social order was a saint soldier, a creative laborer, a poet apostle and a sage statesman.

Foundation of The Sikh Social Order

The foundation stone of all social institutions of the Sikh society was laid by Guru Nanak. The bricks and mortar was provided and the mansion was constructed by his successors. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Guru, gave it the artistic finish to make this social and cultural edifice a living and lasting monument. He built for it the doors and windows and gave the locks and keys, illuminating it with blazing lights of perennial wisdom and inspiration. Very early in life, Guru Nanak started dialating dogmas, puncturing presumptions and disregarding age-old social customs and laws. By refusing to wear the sacred thread and breaking away from the essential *sanskaras* (sacrament) of the Hindu social order, Guru Nanak disassociated himself from Brahmanism, formalism and ritualism of the Hindu society in which he was born. He equally resented the dogmatism, and intolerance of the corrupt *qazis* and *mullas* of his times. He and his successors gave to

Sikhism completely new social laws, new code of conduct, new scriptures and a gurdwara of its own.

The social structure of Sikhism was not only completed by the first nine Gurus but its various institutions were tried and tested for two centuries. All that Guru Gobind Singh did was to reform the existing order from within, and transfer the spiritual and temporal authority of the individual Guru to the collective-spirit of the Khalsa on a permanent basis. It was a tremendous task and Guru Gobind Singh did it with the genius and foresight of a dramatic artist.

The Sikh Gurdwara

In most religions the church or the temple is generally controlled by priestly orders and is connected with rites, ceremonies and worship under the direction of priests. It is completely cut off from the social and political functions of the community. The Sikh temple when founded by Guru Nanak, was called *Sangat* (congregation), the same as Buddhist *Sangha*. All the historical temples founded by Guru Nanak and his successors are known to this day as *Sangat*. Some were placed under Hindu converts and devotees while quite a number were placed under Muslim converts. The Sikh temple now known as the Gurdwara (lit: the door of the Guru or the temple of the Guru) is open to all Sikh and non-Sikh devotees of the Gurus. All services can be performed by the Sikh and non-Sikh devotees except the function of baptism, which can be performed by the ordained Khalsa who has lived up to the ideals.

The Sikh Gurdwara is not merely a place of worship nor is it just a forum for seeking personal

salvation, but it has stood for the total orientation of life of the individual and society towards a creative purposeful existence.

While baptism was introduced by Guru Nanak and slightly modified by Guru Gobind Singh to preserve the inner core of its spirituality and mystic fervour, a number of important functions were attached to Sikh Gurdwara to make it an open socio-political centre of unity and freedom. The institution of *langar*, free kitchen attached to all Sikh Gurdwara is open to all. It helped to demolish the social barriers not only between the Brahmins, Shudras but also Muslims

When Sikhs are baptized they are made to eat in the same plate and drink from the same cup. It is this rejuvenating baptism (called in Sikh theology a spiritual rebirth) which gave a new consciousness to the downtrodden people. They were reborn in new spirit and shook off their cowardice, fear and timidity and acted as leaders of the nation. Those Shudras and down trodden people who for generations had been living with fear and living like serfs, became the masters of their destiny. .

Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh asserted their political freedom and political sovereignty by building the *takhats* (throne), as high as that of any other Emperor, and by making the beating of very large war drums to be a part of their prayer service. The whole collective might of the Mughal Emperors did not dare to destroy these *takhats* and wrest from the Gurus the political freedom which they exercised. Thus the Sikh church became not only the forum of social equality but of political freedom also. In the army of Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh there were many Muslim

warriors who extended their political loyalty to the Sikh Gurus and not to the Mughal Emperors. Thus even the political forum of the Sikh church and Sikh society was not an instrument of power but the headquarter of fight against tyranny and oppression, and fight for peace, harmony and equality. The two features of the Sikh social order are to create social equality between the high and the low, the rich and the poor; secondly to inspire the Sikhs and the masses to fight against all despotism and tyranny

Ethics of The Sikh Social Order

"It is ethical living of a Sikh that is dear to me," said Guru Gobind Singh, "and not his being a Sikh." "Truth is higher than all," said Guru Nanak, "but higher than truth is character."

The Khalsa Holy order was based not only on the personal inspiration of Guru Gobind Singh, but on the social philosophy enunciated by Guru *Granth*. At the time of baptism the Guru gave a simplified code of conduct called *rehat*. It was orally imparted by the Guru and thence by the *Panj Pyaras* to all the initiates. Some of the contemporary disciples of Guru Gobind Singh recorded them and they are called the *Rehatnamas*. The most important *Rehatnamas* are those of Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Desa Singh, Bhai Chaupa Singh.

The *Rehatnamas* state what a Sikh should do and what a Sikh should not do. It is clearly stated that for spiritual inspiration, religious practice, a Sikh should depend mainly on *Guru Granth*, and, God and the ten Gurus should be his own objects of devotion. A Sikh should avoid four cardinal sins: adultery, taking

intoxicants, smoking, cutting hair from any part of the body and eating halal meat (Kutha)."

"The sword" of Guru Gobind Singh, symbolized, "fearlessness, power, and victory of the good over the evil" and he made the sword a part of the social life of the Sikhs"

The sword of the Sikh was always to be used for protecting higher values and never for wanton destruction or power. The sword and spirituality *miri and piri* had to go hand in hand. Guru Gobind Singh combined the holiness of the *rishi* and Christ with the social and political responsibility of the Kshatriya and gave to the world the Khalsa order of men who were saintly as well as worldly.

Bhai Chaupa Singh: "A Sikh of the Guru should not drink wine. A Sikh should not wear the Hindu sacred thread or the *tilak*. A Sikh should not perform *mundan sanskaras*. He should give the tithes as charity in the name of the Guru

He should not steal or gamble. He should never turn his back to the enemy in the battlefield. A Sikh should remain different from Hindu and Muslim creeds (*Khalsa, Hindu Musalman se nyara rahe*). Bhai Daya Singh's *Rehatnama* says: "A Sikh of the Guru should not bow to graves, idols, places of pilgrimage, god or goddesses. He should not believe in the Brahmins or the *Pirs*, nor practice any *mantra*; of *Gayatri* The Khalsa should not wear the sacred thread or perform such ceremonies as "*shradhs*". All rites of birth, death and marriage should be performed according to Sikh rites; A Sikh should help everyone in need. The rich or poor should be treated as equals No fasts such as that of

ekadashi should be kept:

The Sikh social order was thus organized into a well knit socio religious and politically awake cultural community which was to remain alive for centuries to come on its remarkable social philosophy.

Women And Filial Piety

A Sikh is not supposed to renounce the *world*. When the *siddha yogis* asked the Guru how was it possible for him to live in society without being drowned in the turbulent sea of *maya*, the Guru replied "We should live in the world of *maya* as a swan lives on the turbulent sea and as a lotus lives in a dirty pond."

During the time of Guru Gobind Singh women enjoyed no freedom and status in society. In Sikhism equality between men and women is based on the spiritual consciousness that God alone is the *Purusha* (man) all others are His brides: *eka purkh nar sablii*. Men are thus in no way superior to women in the eyes of God. A householder's life is purposeful if the parents do not shirk their responsibility towards their children and the children are loyal to their parents. Perhaps Confucius alone has given such a high place to filial piety as is given in Sikhism Bhai Gurdas, whose writings are considered as the key to *Guru Granth Sahib*, by Guru Arjan writes

Discarding parents, one achieves nothing,

Even if he hears and recites scriptures:

Discarding parents, performing penance

Leads to wilderness and confusion;

Discarding parents, if one worships gods and goddesses, He will acquire no merit;

Discarding parents if one gives charity,
He is an ignorant fool,

The basis of a happy domestic life should be mental and spiritual unity between man and wife. They should be two bodies but one in spirit: *ek jot doe murti*

Sikh women have played a great role in the history of the Sikhs. When Guru Gobind Singh was quite young, the administration of the Guru's darbar was conducted by his mother, Mata Gujari, as is clear from some of her letters now available. After the death of Banda, for nearly two decades the Sikh community was guided by Guru Gobind Singh's wife Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur, the Holy Mother of the Khalsa. Out of 146 missionaries appointed by Guru Amar Das, 52 were women. Never in the history of India had women been given such august position in religious and cultural setup.

Dignity of Labour

Sikhism sharply distinguishes itself from Hinduism by recognizing dignity of labour as the cornerstone of religious and spiritual life. To consider people who work as artisans, cobblers and on menial jobs as pariahs and social outcasts is the greatest sin in Sikhism. They are considered inferior in Hinduism because they are born in low cast families and Brahmins however corrupt and greedy remain the upper and purer class. If anyone visits a Sikh Gurdwara he can see the Sikhs sweeping floors, cleaning shoes of the pilgrims and working in the kitchen langar. Guru Nanak selected Guru Angad Dev as his successor not only because he was a very devout and sincere disciple but because he passed all the tests to which he was put. He willingly performed

humble duties of menials and lowliest of the lowly servants. He was the only one who passed such severe tests thereby proving that he was competent to recognize the human qualities of the lowliest labourer, upholding dignity of labour.

Sikhism believes that all laws of nature and creation emerge from God who is an embodiment of Truth, Justice and Goodness. Every human being is entitled to his freedom and dignity based on Truth, Justice and Ultimate Goodness. In Sikhism no profession and no work is inferior or lowly in social status and to condemn persons because they are born in a low caste is a great sin and unpardonable crime. This sin and crime continues to be committed in many parts of the world.

Bread And Liberty : Degh and Tegh

Bread and liberty, symbolized by two words: *Degh* (Cauldron) and *Tegh* (Sword) are the key concepts of sikh social, cultural and political philosophy which upholds economic equality and political and cultural liberty for all.

The words *Degh* (Cauldron used for preparing food for congregations) symbolizes *Langar* (Food for All Kitchen) attached to many Sikh Temples. All well established Sikh.

Gurdwaras have the Hall for Prayer, and the Hall for Free Food for all (*langar*). No one who comes and participates in the congregations of these Halls of Prayer and Cultural communion can be questioned about his religion, creed and race.

The Persian word *Tegh* meaning Sword, which symbolizes divine Power and stands for supremacy and

sovereignty of Justice, Truth and Goodness, which inspires people to fight against tyranny and oppression and protects innocent people.

Consciousness of human dignity and self-respect among the Sikhs emerges not merely *from* individual conscience but from the moral and social responsibility of every Sikh towards other human beings. This moral and social responsibility is not merely towards friends, family, neighbours but to all human beings who need and deserve help.

A Sikh in his daily prayer remembers and contemplates, *Dharti Mata* Mother Earth. For us the Sikhs, the whole earth is the Temple of Righteousness and Truth: *Dharti Dharamsal* and whatever may be our political affiliations with the country of our birth, our concern should always be for global problems, and the problems of humanity as a whole.

Democratic Foundations Of Sikh Society

Guru Gobind Singh established the Sikh society on the principles of what is now known as democratic and socialistic principles sixty years before Rousseau and about one hundred and thirty-five years before Marx was born. And yet he had received these principles as part of his heritage from the Founder Guru Nanak.

The Sikh Masters emphasized on the belief that men as well as women are artisans of their own destiny. They destroyed the divine-rights of Brahmins and Mullas in Indian society and warned the Sikhs against the possible corruption of their own priestly class. It is in Punjab that the influence of these priestly classes became negligible. The Sikh Gurus aimed at setting up a

democratic religious and cultural order which inspired the individual to develop himself completely and participate in the collective destiny of their community and other fellow travellers on the path of moral and spiritual life.

Democratic spirit meant that no one priest or political leader could impose his ideas on the whole community by threat or coercion. Democratic practice in Sikhism was not to be a political arrangement but a collective will of the people. For us to become a true and disciplined Sikh ultimately means to become a brother to all men and feel as much concerned about the problems of the underdog and the oppressed.

This profound consciousness of Oneness of human Spirit, seeking refuge in One God is the foot-stone of Sikhism, and it is this consciousness which inspires the Sikhs with the democratic spirit. Sikh historical experiences have shown that they have achieved tremendous power, glory and prestige when they stick to these principles.

Dr. Tarlochan Singh





Sikh Diaspora-The Spirit of Enterprise

One may visit any country or community, he is likely to find a Sikh there who has adopted the life-style of that community, learned their language, and developed friendly social contacts with them. It is always a pleasure to meet a Sikh away from home, but more so in remote corners of the world. A friend of mine visited the Northern Territories of Canada a couple of years ago. He was surprised to find a Sikh name in the directory, he telephoned him and the Sikh was pleased to entertain the visitor. I went to Szeged, Hungary and was surprised to hear, "Baba Ji, Sat Sri Akal !" from two young people with turbans on their heads. They were from Delhi, and were studying medicine there.

Travellers in India or abroad cannot fail to observe the enterprising spirit of the Sikhs. One can even hear jokes about it. Two persons were arguing as to whether a Russian or an American would reach the moon first. A third person intervened to say, "Whoever reaches the moon first, he will be pleased to find a Sikh there ready to welcome him to the free *langar* in the gurdwara."

When I came to the United States, European Americans would ask me, "Are you a doctor or an engineer ?" Most of the early Sikh immigrants to America came for higher studies, and the image they created was that of a doctor, a professor, an engineer, or some other professional. Recently, mass immigration to the United States has brought people doing blue collar jobs as well, and they are well known for their sincere hard work. The other impression about the Sikhs in the U.K. was that of a maharaja, a soldier, or a taxi driver.

Different aspects of the Sikh Diaspora have been presented under four sections.

Sikhs Abroad

Today, Sikhs can claim with honor that Sikh gurdwaras are spread all over the world and the sun never sets over the flag fluttering over them. This was earlier the proud boast only of the British, whose empire spread from East to West.

Enterprise, or a Miracle?

I was invited to a Sikh youth summer camp in Woolwich, the famous mid-point of the earth in U.K. The chief guest was the local Mayor who, to my pleasant surprise, was a turbaned Sikh. When I was told that there were Sikh mayors of some other counties too, my soul awakened me to this fact, **"Look! How great is God ! As a student, you saw the British as rulers in the Sikh homeland, and today you find Sikh mayors in the British homeland."** It is left to the observer to decide whether this is the outcome of a miracle or the Sikh spirit of enterprise, or a combination of both. How this could

happen in less than a single generation is a matter worth consideration.

The first mass immigration to the U. K. took place after World War II because the British needed dependable, sincere, and hard working labourers for their factories. The Sikhs were the major choice to be given work permits to immigrate to U.K. The cold climate was not to their liking, and some of them could not even speak English. However, because of their enterprising spirit and willingness to bear hardships, they turned out to be successful settlers in the land of their former white masters. They soon acquired a strong foothold in the foreign land. They were able to send money back home and thereby attract more people to come to U.K. in search of better opportunities. Some educated, enterprising Sikh men were able to establish themselves in business as well. The second and third generation Sikhs have received good education. Now, there are many Sikh professionals, including doctors, lawyers, engineers, manufacturers and political leaders, and they have earned the respect of the British community. To teach Sikh heritage to the youth, Sikhs have recently started a couple of community-run schools. The Sikhs at present are playing a very significant and effective role in the development of U.K. Southall looks like a mini-Punjab to the visitors from India.

North America

In 1897 *The Vancouver Sun*, Canada, reported that some strange-looking persons with turbans were seen in Vancouver. They were the Sikhs serving the British Army who were invited to London to honour their services to the crown. They were taken to Canada on their return journey. Before the first century was over after the

first Sikh landed on the west coast of Canada, there were Sikh ministers in the province, and there is a turbaned Sikh in the Canadian Parliament as well. He is the first person to enter it wearing a turban, otherwise no person with headgear is permitted in the Parliament by law. More than a decade ago, the community started their own schools, both in Vancouver and Toronto (Canada) and California (USA), where the Sikh heritage is taught as an additional subject.

I would like to recall the saga of the early Sikh settlers of Canada as narrated by Prof. Teja Singh who experienced it all personally.

The Canadian Government wanted to keep Canada only for the white people. Therefore, they planned in 1908 to put the Indians, most of them Sikhs, living there into ships and send them to Honduras, in Central America. By then, however, the Sikhs were well established there and had already built their gurdwara in Vancouver.

Prof. Teja Singh (later Sant Teja Singh Mastuana), an L.L.B. of 1902 from Punjab, a post graduate student at Columbia University, New York gave up his studies and took up their case as a volunteer. He immediately prepared the by-laws for the first Sikh organization in Canada, the Khalsa Diwan Society and got it registered there. He guided Sikhs to organize business societies, and invest in house building, lumber mills, etc. and helped the Society to purchase shares in Californian gold mines. Thus armed, he argued with the ministers and proved that the allegations that Indians were a burden on the state were wrong. The Government withdrew the orders. Thus he won a great victory for the Indians.

The Sikhs ran their community *langar*, in the gurdwara. Everyone, including Hindus, Muslims and even jobless Christians, were welcome to take food there free every day. The persons without jobs, performed *sewa* for running the community *langar*. The welfare registers showed that not Indians, but only whites were taking money from the government and benefitting from the state's welfare schemes. The transportation orders, therefore, had to be cancelled. *This could well be called a langar miracle.*

The unfortunate Komagata-Maru tragedy later in 1914 was the outcome of the reaction of the British to their failure in deporting Sikhs from British Columbia. They adopted even illegal and immoral methods to stop the entry of more Sikhs into Canada. When one recalls the whole saga of the Sikhs and the inhuman treatment meted out to them, one wonders at the spirit and enterprise of these early Sikh settlers.

The fighting strength of the Sikhs comes from their faith in Guru Granth Sahib and the philosophy of *Sarbat Ka Bhala* (welfare of all).

The transportation of Indians to Honduras was planned by Canadian intelligence. Two Sikhs were bribed to go to Honduras. On their return they were to give wrong information about the conditions there to misguide the Sikhs for moving out to that country. On their return from Honduras, Sant Teja Singh asked them to give their report in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*. In the Gurdwara, the two Sikhs facing Guru Granth Sahib could not dare to tell a lie. Had they done that for their selfish interest and obtained huge financial benefits from the Govt, it would have ruined the future of the Indians in

Canada. They told the truth, and the plan of the intelligence department failed. The faith in *Guru Granth Sahib* saved the community from being thrown out of Canada permanently. I pray, that we Sikhs may continue to have a similar respect and regard for the living spirit of the Gurus, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. The lesson for us today is we should be sincere to God and Guru; **we should not sell the honor and image of the community under political pressure or for our personal interests. Otherwise, the Panth shall have to pay very heavily for the weakness of the individuals.** The Gurdwara reform movement is before us during which Panth had to make great sacrifices.

A Lesson from History

The government retaliated by passing an illegal order. They did not permit the families of the Sikhs to join them in Canada. Sant Teja Singh lead a deputation including a Christian priest and argued with the cabinet that the decision of the government was illegal and immoral. The government without giving any reason, simply said a final "no" to the Sikh deputation, Sant Teja Singh held a public meeting in Ottawa. It was heavily attended by the whites. He traced the rise and fall of the empires of the world, and proved that when the rulers intentionally did injustice to their subjects, the downfall of their empire began. He observed that such immoral actions by the British government would lead to the destruction of their empire too.

We still read everyday complaints made by the minorities all over the world regarding injustice and atrocities committed against them by the people in power or in majority and our country .is no exception to it. Many

rulers cannot control their ego, and they dig their own grave by committing atrocities on their subjects. *The lesson to be learnt from past and current history is to have faith in the welfare of all people whatever their religion or ethnicity.* We should never forget that the Almighty loves the whole of humanity, and every human being is His child. We should not hurt anyone because the Father, God, is displeased by it and punishes tyrants in His own way.

Gurdwaras in USA

The history of the first Gurdwara in the Pacific Coast area, Stockton, California, also needs to be told. Sikhs were preferred over whites for building railroads in the early 20th century, because they worked harder and longer than Europeans, and also because they were willing to work for lesser wages. Due to jealousy, the white workers harassed and even attacked the Sikhs to scare them away. The Sikhs complained to the contractor, and he gave them permission for any action they thought was necessary for self-protection. When the white workers attacked again, the Sikhs were ready to face them and some white men were injured. The Americans were further demoralized when the jury dismissed their case against the Sikhs, declaring that they had a right to self-defence.

In 1911, when the Sikhs decided to build their gurdwara there, an angry crowd of white men came with arms to stop the flag hoisting ceremony. They gathered on the road in front of the gurdwara and started observing the proceedings. Professor Teja Singh, President of the Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society, explained in English the significance of the Sikh flag on the public

address system. It was attentively heard also by the American mob assembled there. *All the whites were very moved by his words. They joined the Sikhs in raising the first Sikh flag in the United States, and ate langar with them. The first flag hoisting ceremony at Stockton was, thus, truly a great and memorable event.* We need similar Sikh leaders today to preach the universality of the faith, and love for humanity, without diluting the distinctive features of the faith.

Sikh Youth Camps

Teaching Sikh heritage to the youth was started about three decades ago and now there is a Sikh training camp, usually of one week's duration, conducted in every region. The education of youth is also now undertaken by holding Sunday schools in gurdwaras.

These camps have proved very helpful to the youth in acquainting them with their heritage, and instilling pride for it. This has also helped the formation of many Sikh youth organizations for mutual support and studies in Sikh philosophy as well as Sikh history.

Social Activities

(i) *Sewa* : Most of the Sikhs in North America, particularly in USA are well established in their profession and businesses. Many of them are millionaires and some are even billionaires. They are known to have *contributed millions of dollars for the education and welfare* of the American people.

The Sikh faith has a great tradition of providing assistance or *Sewa* to the needy. To practice this *Rehat*, the Sikh organizations and gurdwaras *contribute food and finance* for needy people. For this, they either directly contact the shelters for the homeless or make their

contributions through local societies performing that service. Sikhs have also organized regularly *blood donation camps* at almost every gurdwara. Helping the needy is a very effective method of teaching the philosophy of *sewa* to the youth. These activities have earned a good image for the Sikhs at many places. It has also helped to some extent to counteract the wrong propaganda that Sikhs are a violent people.

(ii) Sharing Sikh Heritage: Sikhs in Canada have started organizing themselves to preach their faith, educate their youth and getting involved in the political processes of the country.

A group of Sikhs in Windsor, Ontario, Canada decided to host a dinner to celebrate Guru Nanak's birthday. Sikh youths were asked to invite their teachers/professors; Sikh families invited their Canadian friends. Local public officials and media members were also invited. Along with a Sikh speaker, a white Canadian professor of Sikh studies from the local university was invited to address the audience. The function was such a success that it became an annual event. Because of its popularity and significance, the media covers the function and its proceedings. The politicians and ministers feel honored to be invited to the gathering.

(iii) Media Services: About a dozen Punjabi newspapers are published, mostly from Vancouver and Toronto. Different societies and gurdwaras also publish a number of monthly/quarterly magazines.

About a dozen radio and TV broadcasts have also been organized by different Sikh societies/gurdwaras. They usually purchase 30 minutes to one hour time from the local and national channels. They relay *Gurbani*

Kirtan, recitation, religious talks, lectures, etc. once a week, while some channels provide service throughout the week.

Other Countries.

1. Far East: The British annexed Punjab in 1849. They were very impressed by the enterprising nature and fighting abilities of the Sikhs. The government took them to the East for fighting during the wars and serving as technicians and policemen during peace. Most of the Sikhs after retirement settled in Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines and other countries. Their present generation, as in U.K., are professionals in different fields, medicine, engineering, social services, etc. The *Komagata Maru* expedition was also organized by these enterprising Sikhs for going to Vancouver. However, one feels sorry to note that currently the Sikh community there is divided into Majha, Malwa and Doaba Sikhs.

2. Africa: Thousands of Sikhs emigrated to African countries during British rule. They were very helpful in developing these countries by providing educated technicians, artisans, machinists, businessmen and other professionals.

Facing the Prejudice

The other side of the picture also needs to be told. Many of the early Sikh settlers, of course, were committed to their faith and were willing to suffer any consequences for living as Sikh. However, some of them thought they should join the bandwagon of the whites. They removed their Sikh symbols, and took to drinking and adopted other Western habits. The reason given was

to avoid discrimination on account of the uncut hair and turban. Today, we find Sikhs with and without turbans in every profession, one may be a doctor, engineer, lawyer, scientist, professor, or an unskilled laborer. This is true whether one visits Europe, America, or any of the eastern countries. The same is true also in India.

A. Turban, a Legal Right

A Sikh (S. Baltej Singh) won his right to retain uncut hair and wear a turban while being a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The case went up to the Supreme Court, which ruled in his favor. The author was gratified to meet and talk to a young turbaned Sikh in Vancouver serving as a lieutenant in the Canadian forces. He passed all the stringent tests and went through the rigorous army training without any problem, while retaining the articles of his faith. *There are many examples to show that a Sikh who wishes to keep his turban in the West can do so without any problem. A Sikh who cuts his hair does by choice, and not because of the pressure of the Western environment.*

B. Turban a Symbol of Self-esteem

Many Sikhs disregard the Sikh *Rehat*, some of them, however, have learned very serious lessons from their experiences.

In Vancouver, there is a third-generation Sikh (without turban) who can pass as a white man. He is fair, well educated, and rich, and employs about half a dozen qualified white people in his auditing firm. White Canadians, therefore, had a feeling of closeness and respect for the Sikh. However, they lost this feeling for him as soon as they came to know that he was not white. He experienced it so many times that one day, when the

Sikh came home, he told his pre-teen son, "Dear Sonny, tie a turban, look like a Sikh, and be proud of being a Sikh. White people are not going to accept us as equals, whatever we may do. Why turn your back on our Guru who sacrificed all his children and his family for us."

Unbiased analysis will show that prejudice is a worldwide phenomenon; it is not only against Sikhs because of their long hair and turbans, but it operates against every minority all over the world. Even when Africans and Asians adopted the Christian faith and lifestyle of the western people, the bias remained against them. It will not, therefore, go away, even if a Sikh removes his turban. Hence, it is desirable for a Sikh to retain his turban, the identity of his faith and share with pride the uniqueness and greatness of the Sikh heritage with the people with whom he socializes.

C. Universal Acceptance of Gurmata

We see a unique phenomenon; even though some whites are adopting the Sikh faith, a significant number of born-Sikhs ignore their faith. It is a fad with some young Sikhs to date and even to marry interracial and interfaith partners. I found that they have not been told anything about the universality of their faith so that they could enjoy the honor of being Sikhs. Many youth are surprised when I tell them about my two experiences in America, which I shall narrate here briefly.

The first is about an interfaith meeting, held in the state university of Cleveland, U.S.A. One of the listeners asked, "What does each speaker think about the people who do not belong to his faith. Will such people go to heaven or to hell?" This was a very sensitive question, and none of the panel members dared to give a direct

answer to it. The audience showed no interest in the roundabout answers because they could easily understand the embarrassment of the speakers for telling the truth.

I was the last person to speak. I explained that such questions do not arise for us because Sikhs believe that no one can claim a franchise on God and no prophet can intercede. One is judged only by one's deeds. God is the Father-Mother of us all. Whatever our faith may be, anyone who loves Him can realize Him. Further, it was a great news to many listeners that the contributors of the hymns in the *Guru Granth Sahib* include Hindus, Muslims, and so-called low-caste devotees (*bhagats*). The mission of the Sikh faith is, "*Sarbat Ka Bhala*, - welfare for all including those who do not believe in God."

Before I completed my last sentence, *all people stood up clapped and gave a standing ovation to Guru Nanak for his philosophy*. What passed through my mind at that moment was indescribable. As a boy I had been told that people believe Guru Nanak to be a *Hindu Ka Guru, Musalman Ka Pir*. However, that day I found people accepted Guru Nanak as a *Jagat* (whole humanity) Guru. The fault for failing to build the right image of the Sikh faith lies with us who could not make known the greatness of the Sikh philosophy in its proper perspective, "*Love for all, hatred for none*." To spread the message of his faith, a Sikh has to practice it in his daily life, not merely believe in it.

On the second occasion, when I was visiting Dallas, Texas, I was invited to give a lecture to the university students. I gave the same information to the youth which I

had given in Cleveland. At the end of the presentation, the professor in charge came to the stage and emphatically remarked, "Didn't I tell you?" Later, I came to know that he was referring to his lecture in the class, in which he appreciated the unique philosophy of the Sikh faith, "*No prophet and no faith can claim a monopoly on God: Anybody who loves God realizes Him*." The students had asked many questions about it. They were so impressed by the basic tenets of the Sikh faith that many of them wanted my address for future correspondence.

Misunderstandings

The popularity and general acceptability of the Sikh faith arising out of its scientific humanism (as some scholars like to call it) has invited jealousy. Some persons with narrow thinking have written or have expressed a lot of misunderstanding about the faith, both in India and abroad.

Here is one case. Dr. H. Bielenber, a serious student of Sikhism, was invited by some Christian denominations to speak to them and answer their questions about the Sikh faith. The audience was made up of the elders and members of the Mission Hall in Swindon, U.K. The talk was arranged to discuss with the audience, to quote one of the elders, that "the values of this Christian country are being eroded by the presence here of an alien faith (Sikh faith)." The speaker convinced the audience regarding the universality of the tenets of the Sikh faith. He explained that the Sikh faith wishes well for every person whatever his religion.

Some of the preachers of other faiths have become jealous, hence they try to tarnish the image of the Sikhs and their faith. Some western scholars supported by some

Indian scholars with Marxist leanings have started a dis-information campaign about the Sikh faith. They say that Guru Nanak did not found a new faith, that Guru Arjan Dev died in prison and was not a martyr and the current version of Guru Granth Sahib is not a true copy of the original version, etc. These assumptions are mentioned as results of research in complete disregard of the known facts. Their one point 'research' mission is to prove that the *Gurbani* has been revised and is not a revelation.

It is also regretted that many Sikhs do not understand the current issues. Some of them accept these distortions as history because they are printed in books and the writers are scholars holding university chairs. Some others agree with them and even support them for personal favour from the writers (professors, and persons in authority), a common weakness in every community all over the world.

Challenges Before the Sikhs

(i) In view of the above situation, the main challenge for the Sikhs abroad is atleast to share the *correct information about themselves and their faith* with the people around them. The Sikhs actively involved in social affairs of the community, particularly members of gurdwara committees, must sincerely live like good Sikhs. This is an essential requirement for building the right and respectful image of the community. Secondly, procedures need to be evolved for avoiding conflicts in the gurdwara sangats. Election processes should be modified in order to avoid bitterness and consequently violent clashes for the formation of management

committees.

A group of scholars *gianis* need to visit Sikhs in different corners of the world and understand their problems for practicing Rehat under their particular situations. Sikh Diaspora needs guidance for practicing the faith. One major difficulty is of language. Gurbani translations may not be available in the local language. Even when available they cannot be recited as *Nitnem* which a Sikh is expected to recite daily. Further the translations do not convey the spirit of the Shabad and they may have many shortcomings.

It is accepted that one has to learn Gurmukhi to properly enjoy the spirit of reciting Gurbani. However, to begin with, particularly children and youth do need instructions in the local language regarding their heritage.

Conferences to explain the Sikh values not only for the non-Sikhs but also for the Sikhs to respect those values and practice them are needed to be held all over the world. A brief booklet describing the unique and universal teachings of the faith needs to be published in the local languages.

Remaining connected with the Panth and keeping oneself involved in Panthic affairs is essential for Sikhs settled in different corners of the world. We must develop a system for this not only for the Sikhs abroad but also for those settled in India outside Panjab. Remaining connected with their roots is essential for all Sikhs.

A standing forum needs to be created where Sikhs representing different regions and nationalities can get together to share their problems and experiences. They may jointly think of resolving their difficulties and differences.

The group organizers shall have to sacrifice their ego as well as their greed for more power. This will bring to the community the much needed internal cohesion and external honor from the public. Every Sikh should live the life of a Sikh, that is free from ego, lust, anger, greed etc. and with a desire to do *sewa*.

Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh



Growing up in Canada -Experiences of a turbaned Sikh

I was born and raised in Quesnel BC by my parents who were Amritdhari before I was born. I kept a turban on my head since I was a little boy. I did not know anything about it or how other people would think about it until I started to go to elementary school. I was approached by many of my fellow classmates about why I keep that turban on my head. I would always react by saying that it was a symbol of my religion. Most of my classmates who were curious were mostly Christians. They did not laugh at me or make fun at me because I had a turban. I was friends with a lot of white people throughout my life and none of them seem to have any problem with it.

As my years progressed through elementary school I was asked the same questions in every grade by people who had not been in my class before and by new people coming to the school. They asked “Why do you wear that turban on your head?”, “How long is your hair?”, “Doesn't it bother you to have that on your head?” I would answer all those questions the same way by

responding, “I wear this turban on my head because I am a Sikh and it is a symbol of my religion. My hair goes down to my waist. No, this turban does not bother me because I have had it all my life and I feel comfortable wearing it.”

I did not experience any difficulty in my elementary years with my turban. One of my friends who also has a turban had a difficult experience in elementary school when one of his teachers said “Why have you got that apple on your head?” All his classmates started to laugh and he felt embarrassed. There were always some ignorant people on the streets who would look at me and my friends who also had turbans and call us “Turban Twisters”, “Hindus”, “Girls”, and other names. We would ignore these kinds of people and not react with any type of anger or violence.

When I started to go to high school I had noticed that things were going to be a lot different in high school than it was in elementary school. My friends who did not have a turban were getting into the phase of going out to parties, drinking with friends and trying to get girl friends. I knew that this was not a life of a Sikh so I stayed away from those situations. Some of my friends who had kept a turban were getting into the idea of going to parties, drinking and talking to girls. They then slowly started to cut their hair, one after the other. I knew why they cut their hair so I didn't really pay any attention to them. The reason they cut their hair was because they didn't care about the religion any more and would like to be popular around school and around the girls.

The thought of cutting my hair also came to my mind but I always kept it inside me. I know that if the day

comes when I cut my hair my life will never be the same. Some of my friends asked me if I was going to cut my hair and I always respond by saying “NO.” I have realized that all parents want their kids to wear a turban but very few actually take the time to teach them about the great traditions and values associated with the turban. They underestimate the impact peer influence can have on a child and how far positive, loving and supporting parents can go to help buffer that influence.

Kids should be able to talk openly and frankly with their parents and not be afraid of them. I think that is why so many kids cut their hair. Parents aren't willing to sit down with them, listen to their problems and offer some advice on how to cope with these problems. Rather the parents get angry whenever the children want to talk to them about their problems in the school. Thus they have no way to cope with it. It puts the kids in a difficult situation of having to live with the daily taunting and ridiculing.

I am sure that if it wasn't for the weekly Punjabi and gurmata classes at the Gurdwara, there is a very good chance that I would have cut my hair. When I was young, I met there so many other Punjabi youths wearing turbans and keeping their hair. I was just lucky enough to have had supporting high school friends. Though there were problems but I was brave enough to live through it. I am truly glad and more over proud to be still wearing a turban to this day.

Growing up in Canada with a turban is not a difficult thing to do. You will experience many people asking you a lot of questions about your turban and the

few ignorant ones who will make fun of it. A turban is a symbol of the Sikh religion. Our Gurus sacrificed their own lives as well as their families for their beliefs in the turban. Here I am today living in one of the greatest countries in the world where there are no threats to a Sikh because of his turban. So there should be no reason at all for a Sikh to lose his turban.

Dr. Gurbakhsh Singh



Modern Sikh

Is our external appearance not consistent with modern framework?

In Sikhism, the Guru gave us the gift and the courage to stand out, and so to belong to a rich, powerful and eloquent tradition. I cannot imagine a more fittingly modern idea. The question is how to model our lives so that our 'difference' makes a statement. Not so long ago, a young Sikh technocrat and I were passing the time of day over a cup of coffee. He is a bright MBA, and a good man but not a 'recognizable' Sikh. All of a sudden he blurted out, "we Sikhs have a very practical and logical religion with an incomparably attractive and modern worldview but our external appearance is not consistent with that modern framework." He was pointing to the turban and bearded visage of the observing Sikh male.

Another incident is from many years ago when I was single. Some kind friends tried to set me up with a Sikh lady in a different town and gave me her telephone number. She was a bright, young, professionally educated Sikh psychiatrist. We talked a few times on the telephone. Here, we both thought, might be some possibilities.

Naturally we wanted to meet face to face to see what kind of chemistry might result. We hadn't yet met and didn't know what the other looked like. One day we were on the phone chatting about the logistics of meeting when she abruptly inquired, "Are you a 'modern' Sikh?"

I knew what she was talking about, but decided to play it for what it was worth. To me the antithesis of being 'modern' is to be 'primitive'. So, my response turned out to be somewhat tactless but not entirely pointless. I countered that I never ever left the house without clothes, could coherently converse on a variety of subjects including religion and politics; therefore, I was not exactly primitive. She thought my response was aggressively if not offensively unresponsive; she had wanted to know if I was long-haired Sikh or not. I thought a crew cut would not necessarily endow me with the so-called characteristics of 'modernity', anymore than long hair would automatically transform me either into a sage or a savage. Needless to say we never met.

I must confess that in both encounters - with the lady psychiatrist and the MBA, initially, I was somewhat taken aback but, upon reflection, realized that perhaps this is how most of the world thinks of us. I see that many Sikhs also seem to reason similarly; that says something for our sense of self and the self imposed psychological 'burden' that many Sikhs seem to carry. The question, of course, is less how others view us, even though that is extremely important but, more significantly, how comfortable we are with whatever we have chosen to be. My cohorts in both encounters insisted that Sikh philosophy and precepts were modern. Modernity for a Sikh would be to understand and live by the very modern

tenets and postulates of Sikhism. And would that not, include the lifestyle of a Sikh including one's appearance as one? It seems to me a very clear outcome of their logic on the modernity of Sikhism.

But in common parlance - in proposing such a conditional definition of modernity implied by my friends - we usually mean only the principles of Sikhism that should govern our every day reality - trade, family and at most the ethical framework of our existence. But in such reasoning both of my friends have created a rift between the postulates of Sikhism and their historical manifestation in the individual Sikh with his Articles of Faith (*Panj Kakaars*), including the unshorn hair (*keshas*). This dichotomy states that other rules of the game such as the ones that dictate our outer garb - are an entirely different matter and perhaps irrelevant and immaterial. One can sensibly suggest that the Sikh appearance was not decided by a people after some sort of a referendum but was willed to them by their Guru. Surely these Articles of Faith are not at all like corporate logos that are redesigned periodically by a professional team of consultants after a survey and market-analysis of the current trends and fads!

Now, one can choose either to walk the Path of the Master or not - that choice is always available. To sit around and 'second guess' the Guru's intention and how he might have decided if he had lived in this 21st century is a game with no rules, or one where every player makes his own rules. It reminds me of many students who protest that the rules and requirements of the course that I teach are unfair and demanding, but this protest occurs usually after a harrowing and hopeless test, and is primarily

limited to those who are floundering. That's when the rules no longer appear convenient or helpful to the learning process but loom as a hurdle to their graduating. Students look only at the fact that the rules impose hardships on them, or set them apart from other friends who may not be in a similarly demanding program. On the other hand, I am aware of the role my students are destined to play as health professionals, and I must design the rules of the game that will prepare them for such responsibility. Inconvenient the rules may be but are they necessary? If necessary, then they are also eminently fair. To demand less would not be doing justice to the professional choices these young people have made in life.

I am not unmindful of the social isolation and the economic repercussions that many Sikhs fear their appearance might produce. The other side of the coin raises an interesting issue; what insecurities in me suggest that life would be so much rosier if only I looked like John Doe! If such attitudes reside in me and govern my outlook in life it must be difficult indeed to look in the mirror. Life has taught me that no matter what I look like there will always be some who will not like me while there will be others who will accept me as I am. For many I will always remain too short or too tall, too fat or too thin, too dark or too pale, too this or too that. No matter how smart I am there will be millions who will not be. No matter how rich I am ... and so on, ad infinitum.

I know full well the pitfalls in taking the less travelled road. I also know that Sikhs are a minuscule minority in any part of the world, even in the Indian culture, except perhaps in Punjab. I know the situation is

not likely to change. I am also convinced that Guru Gobind Singh Ji, when he ordained the Khalsa, never had any expectation that there would ever be more Khalsa than there are people of other kind in the world. We are ordained to remain a minority. We have to learn to rejoice in this and not try to metamorphose into brown *Sahibs*. For instance, there will never be more of any kind of people in this world than there are Chinese, but that is no reason why everyone has to look Chinese or ape their very rich culture.

The five symbols of our religion, including the long unshorn hair, become Articles of Faith only when their magic and historical impact become integrated into our lives and embedded in our psyche such that they define us. Otherwise they remain symbols that can be discarded as and when the mood moves us. As Articles of Faith they become a part of the self and good people will fight and die for them but not abandon them. As symbols they will always leave us uncomfortable and ill at ease. Symbols have a price; they can be bought and sold in the marketplace. As articles that define faith they acquire value which is often greater than life itself; they can't be weighed and measured in the market, nor do they become shopworn. Then the question of their being with the times or not becomes silly, as would a question that demands to know the price, justification or relevance of any part of the Self.

Even though, and perhaps especially because they were so few, the challenge for Sikhs was always to remain undaunted and to walk on the razor's edge of their faith with courage, confidence and a smile. In other words to live life fully not by half measures. That was the meaning

behind Guru Gobind Singh's challenging call for a head on Baisakhi of 1699. This is the lesson that emerges from the sacrifices of Guru Arjun, Guru Tegh Bahadur and countless Sikh martyrs that history has honored. This is what Guru Nanak meant when he challenged his followers to walk with the head in the palm of the hand. I would think that to be able to put your head on the line for principles is an utterly modern concept that only a free people can adopt.

Dr. I.J. Singh



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